

THE IMPACT OF THE MANNING, TRAINING, AND UTILIZATION OF BLACK
COMBAT UNITS DURING WORLD WAR II ON THE RACIAL
INTEGRATION OF THE ARMY

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF THE MANNING, TRAINING, AND UTILIZATION OF BLACK COMBAT UNITS DURING WORLD WAR II ON THE RACIAL INTEGRATION OF THE ARMY, by Major Richard T. Cranford, 212 pages.

Prior to 1950, the Army restricted the service of blacks to limited roles in a racially segregated Army. During World War II, black America fought for an increased combat role, believing that contributions on the battlefield would lead to increased civil rights at home. However, during and following World War II, the Army resisted pressure for it to stop the use of segregation as a personnel management tool. Ironically, the Army finally capitulated to internal and external pressures and integrated its force from 1950 to 1954, faster than comparable changes occurred in American society. The purpose of this thesis is to determine the impact of manning, training, and utilization of black combat units during World War II on the Army's decision-making in regards to racial integration. First, this thesis analyzes the Army's justification for segregation in light of its experience in mobilizing and training black soldiers. Second, it evaluates the performance of black combat units during World War II to determine if the Army's preconceptions of their capabilities in combat are validated. Thirdly, it examines the Army's post World War II planning for the utilization of black soldiers. Lastly, this thesis studies the Army's implementation of Executive Order 9981.

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ACRONYMS

AGCT	Army General Classification Test
EO	Executive Order
ETO	European Theater of Operations
FA	Field Artillery
MTO	Mediterranean Theater of Operations
OCS	Officer Candidate School
ORO	Operations Research Office, John Hopkins University
PTO	Pacific Theater of Operations
ROTC	Reserve Officer Training Corps
U.S.	United States

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Black soldiers have made significant contributions to the United States Army in every major conflict that the nation has fought.¹ The roles and opportunities for black soldiers have changed significantly during the 235 year existence of the United States (U.S.) Army. First, for ninety-one years (1775 to 1886) the Army only offered blacks the opportunity to serve during times of war. Second, for the next eighty-four years (1866 to 1950) the Army offered blacks the opportunity to serve in times of peace as well as war. This service came in the form of limited roles in a racially segregated Army that considered blacks as inherently inferior to their white counterparts. Finally, for the past sixty years (1950 to 2010), blacks have been able to serve in an integrated force in which they serve side by side with whites and have the same opportunities for training and advancement. The Army implemented integration faster than comparable changes occurred in American society. Understanding how the Army managed this transformation provides invaluable insight into the workings of what is often perceived as one of the nation's most conservative and rigid institutions.

Blacks in the United States Army

In 1775, the fledgling United States government prohibited blacks from serving as members of the Continental Army, despite more than a century of service in colonial militias. Often ignored in practice, this prohibition was lifted in 1776 due to manpower needs. The United States followed the same pattern of behavior as it fought the War of

1812 and the Mexican-American War, enacting barriers to prevent blacks from serving in the Army and lifting those barriers as manpower resources became scarce during the course of both wars.² In 1866, following the Civil War, Congress mandated that the Army establish and maintain four units composed of black soldiers: the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments and the 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments. These units became the famed Buffalo Soldiers that are a proud part of the U.S. Army's heritage and represented the nation's first commitment to a permanent place in the military for blacks.³

From 1866 to 1939, the United States did not substantially change its policies and practices for utilizing blacks in military service. The Army restricted the peacetime service of blacks to the number of soldiers required to man the four black regiments mandated by Congress. During the Spanish-American War, World War I, and World War II, the United States continued the practice of increasing black participation in order to satisfy manpower requirements caused by war.⁴ Despite the fact that many blacks were denied the opportunity to serve during peacetime, black America never failed to answer the nation's call during times of war. This dichotomy is clearly demonstrated in the build-up of the Army for World War II.

By the end of 1939, the United States began executing plans to expand the Armed Forces as World War II unfolded in Europe.⁵ The expansion of the Army eventually included an increase in the number of black soldiers, though not right away. In August 1939, the number of black soldiers in the Regular Army consisted of less than five thousand enlisted and five officers.⁶ These black soldiers manned four black combat regiments, 9th and 10th Cavalry and 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments, and two black service units, the 47th and 48th Quartermaster Regiments.

As manpower requirements increased in preparation for World War II, the U.S. Army began to accept an increasing amount of blacks, resulting in the number of blacks in the force reaching peak strength of just over 700,000 in September 1944.⁷ During this time period, the civilian and military leadership of the Army held several negative beliefs about blacks. They believed that “hereditary biological attributes determined the subordinate status of blacks” and “mutual hostility precluded whites and blacks from cooperating as equals.”⁸ This led the Army to continue its policy of segregating blacks and whites into separate units.

The Army’s leadership also believed, reinforced by biased assessments from World War I, that the majority of black soldiers proved to be cowardly, inferior to white soldiers, and unwilling to fight under enemy fire.⁹ As the Army expanded in the early 1940s, the planned growth in the number of black units occurred primarily in support and service units. For instance, in the European Theater of Operations, only 22 of 1,500 black company-sized units were combat units.¹⁰ The small number of black combat units combined with the Army’s use of segregation severely limited the opportunities for black soldiers to serve in combat units.

A convergence of political and military events in 1944 caused the Army to provide several black combat units the opportunity to fight in the European, Mediterranean, and the Pacific theaters. Over the course of 1944 and 1945, the Army’s utilization of black combat soldiers deviated from its expressed policy of strict segregation several times. While many black soldiers fought in units segregated at the regimental and division level, many others fought in battalion and company-sized units in

the same organizations as white combat units and several thousand black soldiers were integrated into white infantry companies at the platoon level.

As World War II ended, some Army leaders, such as the General Staff G1, realized that black soldiers would remain a significant part of the peacetime force. This resulted in retention of some of the black units established during the war.¹¹ Over the next five years, the Truman administration, the Department of Defense and the Army conducted separate reviews to determine how to utilize blacks in the military. These reviews led to policies and directives intended to end discrimination in the Armed Forces. While many felt that ending discrimination in the Armed Forces included desegregation, the Army did not agree. Those who have studied the integration of the Armed Forces point to Executive Order 9981, issued by President Truman in 1948, as the decisive point for integration. After President Truman issued EO 9981, each service worked at developing plans and procedures for implementation that would gain the approval of the Truman administration and the Defense Department.¹²

The Army was still determining how to integrate its forces when the Korean War started in June 1950. In July 1950, for the first time in its history, the Army committed black soldiers to combat from the start of hostilities, albeit in segregated units. However, segregation quickly proved ineffective during the Korean War and less than a year later, in May 1951, the Army approved the integration of all units in Korea and Japan.¹³ By the end of the Korean War in 1953, every Army unit in Korea had integrated. In October 1954, the Army completed integration of every unit in the Regular Army.¹⁴ A study of the position of blacks in American society illuminates the importance of an integrated Army to black America.

Blacks in the United States

Three watershed events in the history of black America occurred between 1865 and 1870. These three events, enacted by Congress, were the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, which respectively abolished slavery, granted American citizenship to blacks born in the U.S., and gave blacks the right to vote.¹⁵ However, much of white America did not consider blacks as equals and were not willing to treat them as equals. This led to the implementation of the practice of segregation in much of the country.

Segregation became a term that referred to a practices adopted by federal, state, and local governments and private businesses to force social separation between blacks and whites. Blacks challenged the legality of this practice, but in 1896 the Supreme Court validated it by affirming the concept of separate but equal in its decision in the case of Plessy v. Ferguson. In this case the Supreme Court upheld the rulings of lower courts that laws mandating use of separate accommodations for whites and blacks were constitutional as long as the accommodations offered to blacks were equal to those offered to whites.¹⁶

Segregation came mostly through passage of a series of Jim Crow laws in many states and cities. First enacted in the 1880s, these laws mandated separation of blacks and whites in every facet of society, from education to behavior (i.e. prohibition of interracial marriage) to public accommodations, such as restrooms and restaurants. Jim Crow laws would remain in place for 80 years, until the zenith of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s.¹⁷ Passage of Jim Crow laws ensured that even those that did not believe in segregation were obligated to practice it.

Segregation and Jim Crow laws enforced the status of black Americans as second-class citizens, leading to an increase in black civil rights activism in the early twentieth century. In the late 1890s and early 1900s, Booker T. Washington espoused the most popular philosophy of early black activists. His philosophy called for blacks to gradually achieve racial equality by: avoiding open confrontation and working with sympathetic whites, improving education of blacks on technical skills required to obtain jobs and improving the economic status of black Americans. In the years before World War I, other black activists, led by W. E. B. DuBois, rejected Washington's views as accommodationism. DuBois advocated challenging the status quo of race relations in the United States and pursuing access to the same higher education opportunities available to white Americans. During both World Wars I and II, DuBois encouraged blacks to support the war effort and enlist in order to compel white America to accord blacks equal status. In the 1930s and 1940s, black activists, most visibly represented by Walter White of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and A. Phillip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, advocated increased criticism, open protest of discriminatory laws and practices and development of black political power to influence policymakers. White and Randolph felt that blacks should not fight in World War II if the US government would not treat black soldiers as equal to white soldiers.¹⁸ Two common causes of black civil rights activists from 1900 to 1950 were an opposition to segregation and a belief that civil rights gains made in the Armed Forces would translate to positive change in American society.

Civil rights activists proved to be prescient as the demise of segregation in other parts of American society over the next twenty years followed the integration of the

Armed Forces in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that separate but equal violated the Fourteenth Amendment in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*. This eventually led to integration of schools across the country.¹⁹ Congress, with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, legislated the end of racial segregation in the workplace and all public accommodations and granted the federal government the power to enforce desegregation.²⁰

Research Questions and Methodology

In the fifteen years between 1939 and 1954, the Army changed from a strictly segregated institution with a small number of black units forced upon it by Congress to an institution that had fully implemented integration. The Army entered World War II with a segregated force and despite some use of units integrated at various echelons, emerged from World War II still committed to segregation. In the five years between the end of World War II and the start of the Korean War, the Army studied its policies for utilizing black soldiers and the performance of black units. In addition, the Army received directives from the Truman Administration and the Department of Defense clearly intended to end the practice of segregation. Despite all of this, the Army entered the Korean War with a segregated force and a plan that it professed would eventually lead to integration in the long-term. Less than a year later, the Army would begin integrating its forces while fighting a war.

This thesis focuses on the study of one primary and three secondary research questions. The primary research question is: what was the impact of manning, training, and utilization of black combat units during World War II on the Army's decision-making on racial integration? This led to three secondary research questions. What

lessons learned did the Army capture about the performance and capabilities of black soldiers and units in combat? How did it apply these to shaping the post-World War II force? What considerations influenced the Army's implementation of Executive Order 9981 from 1948 to 1953?

The primary methodology used for answering these questions was the study of documents outlining the assessments, decisions, and policies of the Army and those organizations that exerted influence on the Army (presidential administrations, the Department of Defense, civil rights activists). Additionally, this study uses the work of historians and social scientists who have studied black soldiers in World War II and Korea and the process of integrating the Armed Forces. This provides a perspective of the events involving black soldiers and the fight for integration that are separated from the commonly-held racist views that tend to distort some of the accounts from the World War II era.

Thesis

The Army's decision-making on racial integration during the post-war period suffered due to its leadership's failure to recognize that experiences in World War II disproved the underlying premises they used to justify a segregated force. The Army believed that segregation provided the most efficient military force despite proven inefficiencies in the manning, training, stationing, and employment of a segregated force. While Army leaders felt that the Army was not a tool for social reform, they ignored the increasing political pressure that indicated that few others felt the same way. Finally, the Army felt that integrating its force would cause a breakdown in discipline and good order

among white soldiers. These factors led the Army to resist taking any substantial measures towards integration during the post-war years.

Purpose and Organization of Study

This study provides an understanding of how the Army's assessment of the utilization and performance of black combat units in World War II impacted its policies on racial segregation in shaping the post-World War II force. This study is not intended to serve as a comprehensive history of the process of integration in the Army or of black combat units in World War II. While it does address both of these topics some events and units that hold historical significance are excluded because they fell out of the scope of this thesis. Foremost among this group are the prominent roles of black service and support units and the Army Air Corps. This study is focused only on black Army ground combat units, leading to the exclusion of service and support units. The transition of the Army Air Corps into a separate branch of service in 1947 led to the exclusion of the 99th Pursuit Squadron and other units of the famed Tuskegee Airmen from this study. This study is organized chronologically with each chapter studying the Army's attitudes, policies, and practices of utilizing black combat units over a limited period of time.

Chapter 2 examines the origins and implementation of the US Army's segregationist policies and practices for the formation and utilization of black combat units from 1940 through 1943. This chapter briefly examines the influence of World War I experiences on the Army's policies on segregation and utilization of black combat units. Finally, this chapter defines the interests and interactions of key civil rights activists and members of the Roosevelt Administration. The objective of this chapter is to determine how and why the Army intended to utilize black combat units.

Chapter 3 examines the Army's utilization of black combat units during the latter half of World War II (1944 and 1945). This chapter also examines the performance of selected black combat units during this period. The chapter's objective is to determine what considerations governed the Army's employment of black combat units and determine if those considerations were proven or disproven by the performance of black combat units.

Chapter 4 reviews the Army's assessments of the performance of black combat units in World War II and examines the policies established to govern the utilization of black Soldiers in the post-war Army. This chapter covers from 1946 until 1954. The objectives of this chapter are to determine the lessons learned about the utilization of black Soldiers in combat units that Army gathered from World War II, examine how those lessons learned were applied in policy and practice, examine the Army's reaction to President Truman's Executive Order 9981 and briefly explore the events and decisions that led to the rapid implementation of integration after the Korean War began.

Chapter 5 sums up key findings and provides the author's perspective on what today's Army may gain by considering the points discussed in this study.

Review of Major Literature

The history of black soldiers during World War II and integration of the Armed Forces are topics that have been extensively studied by both historians and social scientists for the past sixty-five years. Two common themes appear in the works of many of the scholars who have studied these topics. The first theme investigates the performance of black combat units in World War II and the racist views and practices at every echelon that severely decreased the effectiveness of these units. The second theme

examines the Army's reluctance to institute racial integration and the political decisions and military necessities that forced the Army to overcome this reluctance and integrate.

Captain Ulysses Lee's *The Employment of Negro Troops* stands out as the definitive history of black combat soldiers during World War II. Lee, an active duty officer, served in the Office of the Chief of Military History and began work on this study in 1946. First published in 1966, this work focuses on the plans, policies and problems encountered by the Army in utilizing black Soldiers in combat units during World War II. Lee described the objective of his study as follows:

The purpose of the present volume is to bring together the significant experience of the Army in dealing with an important national question: the full use of the human resources represented by that 10 percent of national population that is Negro. It does not attempt to follow, in narrative form, the participation of Negro troops in the many branches, commands, and units of the Army.²¹

Lee's work is extremely detailed and insightful, but is limited to developing the history of policies and decisions that led to the utilization of black Soldiers in combat during World War II. Another comprehensive examination of the role of black Army combat units in World War II is Bryan D. Booker's *African Americans in the United States Army During World War II*, published in 2008.

The works of two authors stand out as definitive examinations of the process by which the armed forces transitioned to a racially integrated force. Morris J. MacGregor's *Integration in the Armed Forces, 1940-1965* is a comprehensive history of how the interaction of the civil rights movement, the traditions of each branch of service and changing concepts of military efficiency led to the integration of the Armed Forces.²² MacGregor wrote this study as part of the Defense Historical Studies Program while serving in the Army's Center for Military History. In 1969, the University of Missouri

Press published Richard S. Dalfiume's *Desegregation of the Armed Forces*. This study charts the changes in the racial policy of the armed forces from 1939 to 1954 and black America's reaction to these policy changes.²³ MacGregor's work offers an incredibly detailed assessment of integration in the Army, Navy, and Air Force, aided by his access to all of the files of the Department of Defense. Dalfiume's work is not as detailed but offers insight into the interactions of politics at the War Department, the various political administrations, and the Army.

Two other works on racial integration of the Armed Forces merit mention here. Richard Stillman's *Integration of the Negro in the U.S. Armed Forces* analyzes the relationship between blacks and military from 1940 until the late 1960s.²⁴ Sherrie Mershon and Steven Schlossman developed a more current look, writing *Foxholes and Color Lines* in 1998. This study, developed as part of a research project conducted by the RAND Corporation for the Department of Defense, focuses on analysis of how political maneuvering was able to overcome institutional and societal resistance to integration.²⁵ Stillman's work is the least detailed of any of these works and is written from the perspective of a social scientist as opposed to a historian. This results in greater emphasis on conclusions than evidence, however his conclusions provide insight that is worthy of consideration. *Foxholes and Color Lines* is well researched and clearly laid out with conclusions and evidence. It purposely relies almost entirely on secondary sources and seeks to provide an update to conclusions drawn by earlier works.

There are many historical works written over the last sixty years detailing the actions of black soldiers and units during World War II and Korea. These range from comprehensive accounts written by historians to unit-specific accounts written by

personnel who served during World War II. Bernard Nalty's *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military*, published in 1986 analyzes the changing roles, opportunities, and contributions of blacks in the armed services since colonial America, often gained by capitalizing on military necessity.²⁶ Nalty's work is insightful and far-reaching; however, it lacks great detail about any specific era. No work reviewed by the author of this study attempts to examine unit performance and the impact of those performances on policies. Robert Jefferson's *Fighting for Hope* offers an insightful examination of the 93rd Infantry Division in a social and political context while Daniel Gibran's *The 92nd Infantry Division and the Italian Campaign in World War II* offers an objective overview of the unique experience of the 92nd Infantry Division. Paul Goodman's *Fragment of Victory in Italy* and Hondon Hargrove's *Buffalo Soldiers in Italy* offer accounts from officers who served in the 92nd during World War II from almost diametrically opposed points of views as Goodman served as senior officer on the division staff and Hargrove served as junior officer in one of the division's subordinate units during World War II.

Two collections of documents that are essential to an examination of this topic are *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces Basic Documents* edited by Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty and the archives on desegregation of the Armed Forces at the Truman Library. Both collections provide volumes of primary source material that focus on Army-level and higher policies and the writings of key decision-makers at the Army, Department of Defense, and Executive level.

Historians depicted the Army as an institution clinging at all costs to segregation until it is finally forced to relinquish this practice by the political decisions of the Defense

Department's civilian leadership and the military necessities caused by World War II and the Korean War. While there is much truth to this depiction, it does not fully credit the Army for the changes it attempted to make or discuss the reasons why the Army did not want to move away from segregation. This study addresses this process and its failings. In order to study the Army's decisions for the utilization of black combat units during and after World War II, it is important to understand the Army's beliefs, attitudes, and policies towards black Soldiers in general and black combat units in particular as the nation entered World War II. The next chapter of this study will establish this understanding by examining these beliefs, attitudes, and policies and key influences.

¹Bryan D. Booker, *African Americans in the United States Army in World War II* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2008), 5.

²Richard J. Stillman II, *Integration of the Negro in the U.S. Armed Forces* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers), 8-10.

³Krewasky A. Salter, *Combat Multipliers: African-American Soldiers in Four Wars* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2003), 51. Law passed by Congress in 1866 established the 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st Infantry Regiments. In 1868, the 39th and 40th Infantry Regiments were consolidated into the 25th Infantry Regiment. In 1869, the 38th and 41st Infantry Regiments were consolidated into the 24th Infantry Regiment.

⁴Booker, 6.

⁵Frank N. Schubert, *Mobilization* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 1995), <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/mobilization/mobpam.htm> (accessed 10 June 2010), 9.

⁶Richard M. Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1969), 44.

⁷Ulysees Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 1966), 416.

⁸Sherie Mershon and Steven Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 78.

⁹Gary A. Donaldson, *The History of African Americans in the Military* (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 1991), 101-2.

¹⁰Elliot V. Converse III et al., *The Exclusion of Black Soldiers from the Medal of Honor in World War II: The Study Commissioned by the U.S. Army to Investigate Racial Bias in the Awarding of the Nation's Highest Military Decoration* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1997), 69.

¹¹Bernard C. Nalty, *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 223-224.

¹²National Archives, "Records of the Office of the Secretary of War," <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/107.html#107.1> (accessed 11 June 2010). Prior to 1947, the Department of War provided oversight of the Army. The National Security Act of 1947 converted the Department of War to the Department of the Army, created the Department of the Air Force and the National Military Establishment to oversee the Departments of the Army, Air Force and Navy. In 1949, the National Military Establishment was renamed to the Department of Defense.

¹³Donaldson, 146.

¹⁴Morris J. MacGregor Jr., *Integration of the Armed Forces 1940-1965* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 1981), 455.

¹⁵Salter, 51.

¹⁶Thomas Zimmerman, "Plessy v. Ferguson," Bowling Green State University website, <http://www.bgsu.edu/departments/acs/1890s/plessy/plessy.html> (accessed 10 June 2010).

¹⁷Vernellia R. Randall, "Examples of Jim Crow Laws," University of Dayton School of Law website, <http://www.academic.udayton.edu/race/02rights/jcrow02.htm> (accessed 11 June 2010).

¹⁸Donaldson, 88-89.

¹⁹Brown Foundation for Educational Equity, Excellence and Research, "Brown v. Board of Education: About the Case," <http://www.brownvboard.org/summary/> (accessed 20 June 2010).

²⁰Borga Brunner and Elissa Haney, "Civil Rights Timeline," <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/civilrightstimeline1.html> (accessed 10 June 2010).

²¹Lee, ix.

²²MacGregor, ix.

²³Dalfiume, 1.

²⁴Stillman, 1-2.

²⁵Mershon and Schlossman, xi.

²⁶Nalty, 2.

CHAPTER 2

ARMY RACE POLICY THROUGH 1943

Overview

In the summer of 1940, the Army began the largest mobilization in its history.¹ The Army's policy regarding the utilization of black soldiers centered upon continued segregation of black and white enlisted soldiers. Army leadership, represented by Secretary of War Henry Stimson and Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall, felt that maintaining segregation was critical for maintaining the military efficiency of the force and for avoiding social experimentation that would derail the mobilization process. However, the implementation of segregation while expanding the Army from its authorized endstrength of 375,000 soldiers² in June 1940 to more than 7.4 million soldiers in December 1943³ resulted in inefficient practices in training and manning the force. In addition, the Army's policy of racial segregation came under increasing political attack during this time period. Both the revelation of these inefficient practices and the development of these political attacks provided early contradictions of the Army's justification for the use of segregation.

Impact of the Interwar Period on the Army's Race Policy

While the widespread utilization of segregation in the Army dated back to the Civil War,⁴ the genesis for the Army's race policy in 1940 lay in the conclusions reached during the interwar period. Following the conclusion of World War I, the Army devoted significant effort to the development of lessons learned from the employment and performance of black soldiers. The Army War College conducted several studies that

resulted in recommendations to the General Staff for the utilization of black soldiers. When black soldiers protested the discriminatory nature of segregation, the Army reaffirmed its use as a necessary policy.

The Army relied on senior officers that commanded black soldiers in combat during World War I to provide lessons learned on the suitability of black soldiers for combat. The Army Expeditionary Force of World War I included two black combat divisions, the 92nd and 93rd Infantry Divisions.⁵ In March 1920, Major General Charles Clarendon Ballou, Commanding General of the 92nd Infantry Division, submitted a report to the War Department in which he states that “the average negro is a rank coward in the dark and I subsequently realized to the full how worthless this trait renders him in the service of Security and Information.”⁶ Lieutenant General Robert L. Bullard, Commanding General of the 2nd US Army, which served as the 92nd Infantry Division’s higher headquarters during World War I, characterized black soldiers as “cowards and rapists, hopelessly inferior as fighting men.”⁷ While the Army relied primarily on reports from leaders of the 92nd Infantry Division, regimental commanders from the 93rd Infantry Division also provided similar feedback, despite the praise that the regiments of the 93rd received while serving with the French Army. These commanders stated that the use of blacks should be limited to labor rather than combat and black soldiers must be led by white officers and non-commissioned officers to serve effectively.⁸

Other reports contradicted the assessments of these commanders. During World War I, the media continually highlighted the performance and bravery of black units. This extended to national media including the United Press and the *New York Times*, not just the black press. Three of the four black regiments in the 93rd Infantry Division

received the Croix de Guerre from the French government for their service in World War I.⁹ General John Pershing, commanding general of the American Expeditionary Force, provided positive assessments of the training, courage, motivation and spirit of black soldiers in a cable sent to General Peyton March, Chief of Staff of the Army, in 1918.¹⁰ Immediately after the end of World War I, civil rights activists collected testimonials about the conduct and bravery of black soldiers from American and French officers as well as mayors of several towns in France.

The negative assessment of black soldiers was not expressed by all military commanders following World War I. Colonel Vernon A. Caldwell, commander of 365th Infantry Regiment, 92nd Infantry Division during World War I, advocated integration of black soldiers at the company and battalion level in a document submitted to the Assistant Commandant of the Army War College in 1920. He believed that black units performed best when incorporated at the company level into white regiments.¹¹ Caldwell cited the negative effects of segregation on the morale of black soldiers and teamwork between black and white units as the primary justification for integration.¹² Colonel Franklin Dennison, commander of the 370th Infantry Regiment of the 93rd Infantry Division during World War I, wrote after the war that he thought black soldiers were disciplined, obedient, and withstood hardship with little complaint. He identified a high illiteracy rate as the biggest challenge of leading a black unit, as this made it more difficult to generate non-commissioned officers.¹³

Another area that generated considerable thought and discussion was the Army General Classification Test (AGCT). The Army administered this test to new soldiers in 1917 to assist in identifying intellectual capabilities. Black soldiers consistently scored

lower on this test than white soldiers. Many in the Army interpreted this as evidence that black soldiers were not capable of performing at the same level as their white counterparts. With the increased use of standardized testing in the education sector as well as the Army, social scientists debated the validity of using this type of test as a measure of inherent ability. Several studies published in the 1920s and 1930s found that performance on tests such as the AGCT reflected a combination of formal education and inherent intelligence. While some Army officials expressed doubts about the validity of drawing conclusions about the inherent ability of soldiers based upon AGCT results, the Army as an institution maintained its view that blacks were mentally inferior to whites.¹⁴

During the interwar period the Army War College conducted research projects on behalf of the General Staff.¹⁵ One area in which the War College devoted some of its efforts was studying and formulating recommendations on how best to utilize black soldiers in the Army. In 1924, the War College conducted a survey of its faculty and student body soliciting opinions on the proper utilization of black soldiers. Of eighty four officers that responded, seventy-six favored the use of black soldiers in combat units, while only eight respondents advocated restriction of black soldiers to service units. Two officers advocated complete integration of black and white soldiers in combat units.¹⁶ One officer who advocated integration, Colonel James Parsons, justified his stance by stating that if segregated units were maintained then “racial antagonism will develop between white and Negro units.”¹⁷ Parsons felt that integration would prevent this conflict because “even in the south white men work along side of the Negro without objecting, and it is reasonable to suppose that if he will do this, he will not object to serving alongside of him in time of war.”¹⁸

The divergence of opinions in the Army on the place of black soldiers continued over the next ten years. A 1925 report titled “The Use of Negro Manpower in War” reflected the prevailing opinions of the faculty and student body of the War College. This study provided insight into the Army’s assessment of black soldiers.

1. Facts

- a. Blacks are naturally subservient to whites and believe themselves to be inferior to white.
- b. Blacks lack the initiative, resourcefulness and self-control in the face of danger that whites possess.
- c. Blacks are mentally inferior to whites.
- d. In past wars, blacks have performed well as laborers but are inferior to whites as technicians or combat soldiers.
- e. Political pressure forced the Army to form the 92nd and 93rd Infantry Divisions and commission 600 black officers during World War I.¹⁹

2. Opinions of the War College

- a. Newly created black units should not exceed battalion size
- b. Blacks soldiers should not be assigned to white units as individuals
- c. Black officers in World War I failed as combat officers.
- d. Political or racial pressure should not be allowed to force the Army to alter its policy on utilization of black Soldiers.²⁰

In 1936, another War College report stated the conclusion of its students that black soldiers are easily susceptible to bad leadership.²¹ A 1940 War College survey showed that the majority of the officers at the War College felt that “Negros could only associate

socially with the lowest class of whites. This social inequality between blacks and whites made any close association of black and white soldiers detrimental to harmony and efficiency.”²²

An incident during 1938 highlighted the Army’s commitment to segregation as a policy. Black soldiers stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, complained to reporters from the *Kansas City Call*, a prominent black newspaper, and the War Department about racial discrimination on the part of the installation. Black soldiers and their families were not permitted to use any of the recreational facilities on post. An Army investigating officer found that the installation’s practices did not constitute racial discrimination. He stated that what seemed like discrimination to an outsider were actually measures to “ensure that the limited recreational and athletic facilities available for the enlisted personnel be utilized in such a manner as to prevent any untoward incident due to the intermingling of white and negro soldiers.”²³

Application of Segregation in the Growing Army

Armed with a policy of racial segregation refined during the interwar period, the Army entered the mobilization process in 1940 with the view that any deviation from a segregated force would damage its effort to prepare for war. The War Department made several compromises with Congress to fend off legislators’ attempts to steer the Army away from such discriminatory practices as segregation. These compromises resulted in unprecedented growth of black units in the regular army. The process of implementing segregation in this rapidly growing force proved daunting. This segregation policy greatly undermined the effectiveness of the officer corps in black units.

While refining its mobilization plans in 1940, the divisions of the General Staff developed several options for how to properly utilize black soldiers. All of these options included the premise that the War Department would not intermingle black and white soldiers within units. The War Department felt that the Army must reflect the prevailing social conditions of the nation and that it could not become involved in solving the social position of any particular racial group.²⁴ General Marshall expounded upon this position several times in 1941. In a letter to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Marshall provided four reasons why segregation was necessary: (1) he stated that the War Department could not ignore the social relationship between blacks and whites; (2) he opined that a lack of formal education resulted in blacks generally having lower intelligence and occupational skill levels than whites; (3) Marshall argued that the Army required the freedom to employ personnel in accordance with their capabilities; (4) social experimentation by the Army would endanger efficiency, discipline, and morale.²⁵ In correspondence to the Secretary of War, Marshall took an even more forceful stand, writing that the Army should not be made to solve a social problem that had troubled the nation throughout its history and any attempt to do so would complicate the War Department's mission and jeopardize discipline and morale.²⁶

During the summer of 1940, the Army's mobilization plan involved creating new units and mobilizing existing National Guard units into the Regular Army. Some of these units were designated to absorb the anticipated pool of black recruits. Congress crafted several pieces of legislation to provide the resources necessary to execute the Roosevelt administration's mobilization plan. One piece of legislation allowed the President to assign recruits to the branches of the Army in whatever quantities the administration

deemed necessary. Several Congressmen, intent on ensuring that the nation had the ability to maximize the use of all personnel, inserted an amendment into this legislation preventing the Army from denying assignment to any particular branch due to race, creed, or color. The War Department felt that this broadly worded anti-discrimination clause would disrupt its ability to exercise control necessary to man both black and white units. The War Department struck a compromise with Congress by changing the designation of some of the white units to black units in exchange for a more narrowly worded definition of discrimination. This compromise resulted in the doubling the number of authorizations for black soldiers in the Regular Army during the first year of mobilization.²⁷

The Selective Service Act of 1940 was the primary legislation that shaped personnel mobilization in the Army. Representative Hamilton Fish and Senator Robert Wagner, both of New York, proposed inclusion of broad anti-discrimination clauses in the Selective Service Act. Congressmen from southern states believed that these clauses were attempts to desegregate the Army and fiercely debated their validity and purpose. Congressional pressure and pressure from a growing lobby of civil rights activists resulted in the War Department committing to increased representation of blacks in the Army (10 percent, to equal their proportion in the general population), and opening all branches of service to blacks including aviation. While most felt that the Army did not concede very much, for the first time, in the Army publicly detailed its plan for expanding the role of blacks in the Army.²⁸

Managing the expansion of a segregated Army proved a daunting task for the War Department. The Army's mobilization plan called for activation of many new units, both

black and white. Activation of new units required a great deal of resources, such as land, administrative buildings, troop billets and mess facilities. Due to segregation, if these resources were not available for a black unit, the Army could not activate that unit. This meant deferring the induction of the number of blacks needed to man that unit. What began as the deferral of 500 blacks in the second month of Selective Service increased exponentially as each month passed and more unit activations were delayed by resourcing shortfalls. In November 1941, approximately 28,000 blacks were in a deferred induction status.

By 1943, hundreds of thousands of black inductees were deferred from entering the Armed Forces. This bred resentment in both blacks and whites. Blacks felt that they were being denied the opportunity to serve while whites resented continued induction while watching black inductions delayed.²⁹ As the backlog of black inductees grew, the Selective Service started to question the effectiveness of maintaining racial quotas. On 17 February 1943, the head of the Selective Service, Paul McNutt, proposed issuing draft calls without reference to race. He cited his concerns over 300,000 deferred black inductees and potential legal action as the nation ran out of draft-eligible single white males and began inducting white husbands and fathers while qualified single black males remained at home.³⁰ Secretary of War Stimson response to McNutt stated that the Army's mobilization plan for 1943 was based on the assumption that black soldiers would be inducted at a uniform rate every month. Changing this rate "would so gravely and adversely affect the Army as to seriously impair the military effort."³¹ Stimson further revealed the Army's plan in regards to assimilating blacks into the Army, telling McNutt that once the Army reached full strength, black inductions would be restricted to the

number required to maintain the population of black soldiers at 10 percent of the force. He cautioned that if they used “any other method we would find ourselves with a greater number of Negro soldiers than would be required to replace losses in Negro units and would then be forced to mix Negro and white enlisted personnel in the same unit.”³²

To avoid losing its ability to dictate the inflow of black soldiers, the Army created more black units to absorb the backlog of deferred black inductees. This culminated with the activation of three black combat divisions--the 93rd Infantry Division in spring of 1942, the 92nd Infantry Division in fall of 1942 and the 2nd Cavalry Division in early 1943. Though the War Department originally opposed creating more black divisions based upon feedback about their ineffectiveness in World War I, it approved this action to increase the number of available positions for black soldiers.³³ The impact of the Army’s application of segregation to Selective Service quotas was 300,000 eligible blacks that weren’t serving as the Army began conducting major operations in World War II and creation of units based on a desire to maintain segregation and not operational requirements for that type of unit.

Another aspect of mobilizing a segregated force that the Army struggled with was finding locations to station the newly activated black units. Stationing plans required balancing available resources on a post, size of black civilian population in the area, and community sentiment. Few locations satisfied all of the requirements, particularly favorable community sentiment. Communities across the nation expressed concerns about stationing black units in their vicinity; these concerns ranged from towns in the south asking only for units without any northern blacks to towns in the west that felt they did not have sufficient black recreational facilities to sustain the increase in black

population. The Army overcame this problem by deciding that military necessity trumped community opinion.³⁴

The practice of segregation in the rapidly expanding Army undermined the effectiveness of the officers in black units. Army assignment policies caused a great deal of officer turbulence in these units. The dynamics of serving under segregation often alienated black and white officers alike. These factors resulted in officers, particularly company-grade, in black units that were inexperienced, frustrated, discouraged, disinterested, or some combination of all of these.

Army assignment policies for officers serving in black units caused a great deal of officer turbulence within these units that proved detrimental to unit performance. The Army felt that black units would require more officers than white units to allow closer supervision and more individual attention to soldiers. The Army established a planning factor of 150 percent officer fill for black units.³⁵ In June 1940, there were only five black officers on active duty, three chaplains, and Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Sr. and Captain Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. The four active duty black combat regiments, the 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments and 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments, were entirely manned by white officers. The mobilization plans called for the addition of four black regiments onto active duty. This included mobilizing three black National Guard regiments, the 372nd Infantry Regiment, the 184th Field Artillery Regiment and the 369th Coastal Artillery Regiment³⁶ and creating a fourth black combat unit, the 366th Infantry Regiment. These three National Guard regiments had a total of 150 black officers. In addition, there were 350 three black officers in the Army Reserves eligible for mobilization to fill the manning requirements of these units. The Army's policy at this time was to avoid mixing

white and black officers in the same unit, preferring to fill these black units with black officers.³⁷

As the mobilization progressed, the Army struggled to produce enough officers to meet its manning requirements. By 1942, the Army realized it would need to emphasize accession of more black officers to help fill some of the requirements in black units and began to move towards a policy of manning units with junior black officers and senior white officers. The Army established a policy of assigning black officers to units in groups. This meant that the complement of black officers for a battalion would all report at the same time to avoid having one or two black officers trickle into the unit. This meant that the company-grade leadership in these units would all rotate out at the same time, often causing delays of several weeks in unit training timelines and this new group of officers would have to start from scratch in establishing positive command relationships with their soldiers.³⁸

Over the same period of time, the Army's practices in selecting white officers to serve in black units underwent significant changes. The Army's initial concept of the ideal officer to lead black soldiers was a white officer from the South, because it was felt that these southern officers were the most experienced in handling blacks.³⁹ However, a War Department special inspector conducted a study of black units in 1942 and reported that the morale in many black units was low due to poor leadership. This caused the Army to institute a requirement that only white officers awarded the highest ratings on their efficiency reports were eligible for assignment to black units. More turnover of officers in black units ensued.⁴⁰

In 1943, the Army instituted additional changes in the policies for assigning officers to black units that would negatively impact officer effectiveness. In response to complaints that the policy of rotating black officers into units in a group did not permit adequate transition between leaders, the Army authorized commanders to retain white officers for three to six months after their black replacements arrived. The intent of this was to provide commanders the flexibility to ensure a successful transition between leaders; however, many commanders kept the white officers in leadership positions with the black officers serving as a second in command or assistant. This created situations in which command and control was split between black and white officers.⁴¹

During this same time, Army Ground Forces Command established a policy allowing white officers assigned to a black unit to rotate to a white unit after eighteen months if they so desired. This policy was instituted in response to complaints by white officers who felt that their excellent performance resulted in assignment to black units with no chance of leaving. The only requirements to meet this rotation policy were for an officer to achieve eighteen months of continuous service in a black unit and receive a very satisfactory or excellent rating on their efficiency report.⁴²

The Army also instituted a policy allowing commanders to transfer black officers between units in order to fill positions that would gain those officers promotions. Black officers often did not have promotion opportunities in the unit that they were in because Army policy stated that no black officer should outrank or exercise command over a white officer in the unit. As black and white officers filled units, the presence of the white officers meant that those black officers that warranted promotion would have to transfer to another unit to gain that promotion.⁴³ The sum effect of the implementation of the

policies outlined above was a constant turnover of personnel in black units, with experienced and accomplished officers constantly departing, replaced by inexperienced, newly commissioned officers.

The observations of Lieutenant General Ben Lear, commander of 2nd Army, illustrated the negative effects of the Army's officer manning policy for black units. Lear pointed to a number of inspection reports that showed drastic fluctuations in performance in units manned with all black officers. These inspection reports showed that a unit that was evaluated as satisfactory on a task during one inspection would degrade to an unsatisfactory rating on the same task during its next inspection. Lear pinpointed the source of this fluctuation in performance as the black officers in the unit.⁴⁴ With wholesale changes in leadership of many units at all times due to the Army's officer assignment policies, it is understandable why unit proficiency levels would fluctuate in this manner.

The dynamics of serving in a black unit in a segregated Army often alienated both black and white officers. White officers in black units were often required to perform additional duties not required of officers serving in white units. To prevent racial conflict between black and white soldiers on an installation or between black soldiers and white civilians off of the installation, white officers were required to perform additional duties unique to black units, such as roving watch on post, coordinating transportation for black soldiers going off of post, and standing guard at off-post recreational facilities.⁴⁵ In units that were manned with black and white officers, white officers were assigned traditional additional duties with greater frequency as many post commanders would not allow black officers to perform those duties. This included duties such as post exchange inventory,

off post patrol officer of the day, and finance certification officer.⁴⁶ Civilians in towns near military installations, particularly in the South, made white officers serving in black units feel inferior.⁴⁷ These officers often felt that they were doing less to support the war effort than their counterparts serving in white units. The 92nd Infantry Division sent a report to the General Staff that outlined frustrations felt by many of the Division's white officers. This report identified these frustrations as remote installations, extended unit training timelines, and the difficulties presented in training large groups of soldiers who scored in grade IV or V on the AGCT.⁴⁸ Many white officers considered assignment to a black unit as an indictment of their performance in their previous unit or in Officer Candidate School.⁴⁹ It was also common for white officers to become frustrated by what they considered the constant strain of trying to avoid any behavior that could be construed as discriminatory by their black soldiers.⁵⁰

On the other hand, black officers also often felt alienated by the same dynamics. In units with both black and white officers, black officers resented the fact that they were not trusted with all of the responsibilities of being an officer. Black officers also resented their segregated quarters and mess facilities that were often inferior to those occupied by white officers. Many black officers came from the northern states and their time in the Army represented their first exposure to Jim Crow laws. These officers felt alienated by their first exposure to such overt prejudicial treatment. In addition, blacks serving in units with all black officers were rotated into these assignments as a group, meaning that they often struggled as there were no experienced peers in the unit to provide advice. In addition, there were cases in which power struggles erupted between black officers and their black non-commissioned officers as both groups tried to define their roles and

authority in the unit. Black officers knew that most white commanders preferred to have white officers within the unit instead of black officers and were very sensitive to anything that might be construed as discrimination.⁵¹

Some commanders felt that racial tension was so prevalent between officers that the Army should minimize the number of units with both white and black officers, using such an organization as an emergency measure only. While many units did struggle to resolve these issues, other units with black and white officers performed well with these officers complementing each other as opposed to competing with one another. Those units with officers of just one race experienced the same mixed success rate.⁵² The constantly changing Army policies due to segregation degraded the effectiveness of officers assigned to black units.

Civil Rights Activists Attack Segregation

While the Army focused on mobilization, civil rights activists seized on the likely onset of another war and the upcoming presidential election in November 1940 to launch concerted efforts to influence the Army to abandon its segregation policy. Several factors combined to provide civil rights activists with increasing national influence. One such factor was changing demographics of the United States' black population. The presence of civil rights supporters within the Roosevelt administration was a second factor. Civil rights activists also increased their political influence by winning increasing numbers of whites over to their cause.

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, the demographics of black America shifted. Blacks began to leave the rural South in large numbers for urban and industrial areas. Between 1910 and 1940, two million blacks left the southern United

States for the northern United States; hundreds of thousands more blacks that remained in the south moved from rural to urban areas. The percentage of the black population living in urban areas more than doubled from 22 percent at the turn of the century to 48 percent in 1940.⁵³ The black population in major Northern cities increased exponentially: New York's black population grew from 91,000 to 327,000, Chicago's black population increased from 44,000 to 233,000, and the number of blacks in Detroit went from 5,700 to 120,000.

This urban migration of blacks ultimately meant a large increase in the number of blacks registered to vote.⁵⁴ Southern states had effectively denied the right to vote to blacks for decades through the use of such methods as the poll tax, literacy tests, and the grandfather clause.⁵⁵ These policies had become so pervasive and effective that in 1940 only 3 percent of eligible blacks in the South were registered to vote.⁵⁶ This changed when these blacks moved out of the South.

Civil rights activists gained increased political influence due to the presence of civil rights supporters in the Roosevelt administration. Since the Reconstruction era, black voters had consistently favored the Republican Party in elections. However, Roosevelt's New Deal program during the Depression lured many black voters during the 1936 Presidential election.⁵⁷ Eleanor Roosevelt, the First Lady, was the chief civil rights supporter in the Roosevelt administration. She often allied with sympathetic administrators of various New Deal programs to champion the cause of blacks with President Roosevelt.⁵⁸ Black voting power in the Democratic Party combined with Eleanor Roosevelt's influence provided civil rights activists with access to the Roosevelt

administration, something that they had not enjoyed with any previous Presidential administrations.

In September 1940, Eleanor Roosevelt played a critical role in arranging a meeting between the President and three prominent civil rights activists, Walter White, A. Phillip Randolph, and T. Arnold Hill.⁵⁹ At this meeting, the civil rights activists discussed racial integration in the military and requested a strong commitment to preventing discrimination in the execution of Selective Service, admission of blacks into the Army Air Corps, the Nursing Corps, and Red Cross and additional opportunities for blacks in the Navy. While the Secretaries of War and Navy balked at the thought of providing these concessions, the civil rights activists had struck at an opportune time.

With the 1940 Presidential election less than two months away, President Roosevelt did not want to risk alienating black voters. His Republican opponent, Wendell Willkie, had already publicly declared himself as an enemy of all racism and gained the endorsement of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, an influential black newspaper of that time.⁶⁰ The War Department drafted a proposed set of measures that President Roosevelt approved and in October 1940, the President announced a revised racial policy in the military. The elements of this policy included: an increase in the number of blacks in the services to 10 percent of the Army, admission of eligible blacks to serve in the Army Air Corps and officer training, and promotion of Benjamin O. Davis, Sr. to the rank of Brigadier General, the first black general officer in the United States Army.⁶¹

While these measures were accepted as progress by many segments of the black community, not everyone accepted them as a substitute for the discontinuation of segregation. No single incident demonstrated the increasing political influence of the civil

rights activists more than the circumstances leading up to the issuance of Executive Order 8802. Following the election of 1940, civil rights activists attempted to work through their Roosevelt administration contacts to combat discrimination in the defense industry, a sector with an increasing number of jobs due to war production. After discussions with the Office of Production Management and federal jobs officials resulted in no progress, A. Phillip Randolph began to organize a march onto Washington scheduled for 1 July 1941. Considering this a potentially embarrassing situation, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802.⁶² This order “reaffirm[ed] the policy of the United States that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color or national origin.”⁶³

Civil rights activists increased their political influence during this time period by winning over an increasing number of whites. The primary method of accomplishing this was to transform the cause of equal rights for blacks into a broader fight for liberty.⁶⁴ In January 1942, the *Pittsburg Courier* published a letter from James Thompson, a black man working in an airplane factory in Kansas. In this letter, Thompson stated:

The V for victory sign is being displayed prominently in all so-called democratic countries which are fighting for victory over aggression, slavery and tyranny. If this V sign means that to those now engaged in this great conflict, then let we colored Americans adopt the double V for a double victory. The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our own enemies from within. For surely those who perpetuate these ugly prejudices here are seeking to destroy our democratic form of government just as surely as the Axis forces.⁶⁵

Thompson’s letter served as the impetus for the Double V campaign. The Double V campaign sought to affirm the value of blacks to the war effort and highlight disparity between the democratic ideals that the United States was fighting to uphold and conditions for blacks.⁶⁶ Civil rights activists enjoyed great success in linking the

campaign against the Axis with their campaign against discrimination at home. When Hitler's racist beliefs became more widely known with the publication of the English translation of *Mein Kampf* in 1934 and Italy conquered Ethiopia in 1936, W. E. B. DuBois wrote that "if Hitler wins, every single right we now possess, for which we have struggled for more than three centuries, will be instantaneously wiped out by Hitler's triumph. If the Allies win, we shall at least have the right to continue fighting for a share of democracy for ourselves."⁶⁷

From 1940 to 1943, civil rights activists continued to attack the practice of segregation in the Army. In fact, one year before the 1944 Presidential election, twenty-five civil rights groups met and developed a common plan to influence Republican and Democratic candidates to support integration in the armed services.⁶⁸ While unsuccessful in gaining anything more than minor policy changes and concessions from the military establishment, civil rights activists demonstrated both the increasing political influence provided by black voters and the political astuteness to wield this influence effectively. Even Secretary of War Henry Stimson acknowledged this in 1940, noting in his diary that "there is a tremendous drive going on by the Negroes . . . to force the Army and Navy into doing things for their race which would not otherwise be done."⁶⁹

The Inefficiencies of Maintaining a Segregated Army

The practice of maintaining a segregated Army while rapidly increasing the size of the force resulted in inefficiencies in the areas of manning and training black units. The process of preparing facilities that would adequately segregate black units negatively affected the Army's ability to properly manage personnel. The large increase in the number and type of black units coupled with the Army's cadre system resulted in black

units taking longer to train than a white unit of the same type. Segregation also undermined the effectiveness of both white and black officers that led black units.

The requirement for separate facilities in order to adequately segregate black units from white units resulted in poor personnel manning practices. The rapidly growing Army required an even greater level of growth in facilities. Housing black units was further complicated by the requirement to provide facilities that prevented black units from mixing with white units.⁷⁰ The Army standard facility design was intended to accommodate a combat division organization of units with administrative buildings, troop billets and mess facilities occupying a central part of an installation with supporting recreational facilities.⁷¹ In order to maintain segregation, black units were housed outside of this central hub in separate facilities on a remote part of the installation. This required building of additional facilities, such as recreational facilities, to meet the separate but equal standard. The practice of segregation did not permit black units to fill in partially vacant facilities occupied by white units.

The Army's mobilization schedule detailed specific units for activation (new unit) or mobilization (National Guard unit) each month. The personnel system worked through the Selective Service boards to induct the appropriate number of personnel to meet manning requirements for these units each month. With black units, available facilities became the data point upon which personnel assignments were based rather than vacancies or requirement. The G1 sent new black soldiers to units on installations that had available facilities and not to where authorized vacancies existed, resulting in some black units receiving personnel far in excess of their requirements while other black units remained filled below required levels.⁷²

Segregation negatively impacted personnel manning in black units in another way. Just as in World War I, beginning in 1941, all new soldiers completed the Army General Classification Test (AGCT). The World War II version of this test attempted to classify a soldier's rate of learning based upon natural ability, schooling and education, socioeconomic class and cultural background. The AGCT classified personnel into five groups based on score (grades I through V). Personnel in grades I through III were considered potential leaders, specialists, and technicians (OCS candidates were drawn from grades I and II). The Army typically assigned personnel classified as grades IV or V to semi-skilled or labor positions.⁷³

The Army's manning practices directed that generally no more than 10 percent of a unit's strength should consist of soldiers classified as grade V on the AGCT. This ensured units received adequate number of personnel with more technical aptitude (as measured by higher ACGT grades) to help train and coach the grade V personnel.⁷⁴ However, the requirements of segregation did not permit the Army to man black units in accordance with this type of distribution.⁷⁵ From March 1941 through December 1942, 440,000 black soldiers took the AGCT. 216,000 (49 percent) of those soldiers received a grade V classification. In comparison, of four million white soldiers that took the ACGT over the same time period, approximately 350,000 (less than 10 percent) received a grade V classification.⁷⁶ In an integrated force, the 566,000 total soldiers classified as grade V could have been distributed throughout the total population of 4.5 million soldiers, only slightly exceeding the Army's 10 percent guideline. However, segregation ensured that approximately half of the soldiers in black units manned during this time period consisted of personnel classified as grade V on the AGCT.

Some Army officials saw the inefficiency created in trying to assign black soldiers who scored lowest on the AGCT. The head of Army G3 Organization-Mobilization Group, Colonel Edwin Chamberlain, proposed what was called the Chamberlain Plan in 1942. Chamberlain assessed that the large number of blacks with low scores on the AGCT made it impractical to group them together in the same units. Instead he proposed assigning blacks who scored in grade IV and V on the AGCT to white units to serve as cooks, orderlies, and drivers. Blacks who scored in grades I, II, and III on the AGCT would man black units. The General Staff considered Chamberlain's Plan but decided against implementation.⁷⁷ The AGCT's accuracy as a barometer of a soldier's capacity to learn became a much-debated issue after World War II. However, the Army accepted it as a valid and accurate tool at the time of its use. Segregation again prevented the Army from following its own manning guidelines due to the detriment of its force.

The negative impact of facilities shortfalls on personnel manning also delayed unit training. Army doctrine at that time called for units to train together as an entire group.⁷⁸ Units that did not have their full complement of personnel were often delayed in the training process until the full complement of personnel arrived. Delays of this type impacted not only the unit in question, but the units scheduled to train after it. This system resulted in black units often taking considerably longer to complete training than similar white units.⁷⁹

The Army's use of a cadre system for generating and training new units proved ineffective when applied to the segregated force. The Army generated new units by taking a core group of experienced soldiers from existing similar units to form the

nucleus of the new unit. The purpose of this cadre was to provide seasoned personnel and lead the training and development of the new unit.⁸⁰ However, when generating new black units, the Army quickly outpaced its existing stock of experienced soldiers. Having only the pre-existing four black combat regiments to draw from, the Army experienced a shortage of NCOs, particularly outside of the infantry and cavalry specialties with which to form cadre for newly generated artillery, anti-aircraft artillery, quartermaster, engineer, and other types of units.⁸¹ This often resulted in utilization of inexperienced soldiers from a unit that had just completed training to form the cadre for another unit and use of experienced soldiers from different specialties to form the cadre for an unlike type of unit. As early as the summer of 1941, the Army recognized these difficulties and provided solutions such as authorizing the use of white soldiers to form cadre for new black units until the black cadre was trained. The problems generated by use of the cadre system in the segregated Army would continue throughout World War II.⁸² This process of using increasingly ill-matched cadre to form the nucleus of new units certainly was not how the Army intended this process to operate. The requirement to maintain segregation caused this method to quickly become ineffective. So as early as 1941, the Army was forced to experiment with integration.

One aspect of training to which the Army did not apply segregation was officer training. Throughout the duration of World War II, black and white officers trained together in integrated Officer Candidate School classes with the exception of Army Air Corps officers. The Army based this decision on the overwhelmingly negative feedback from the World War I segregated OCS for black officers at Camp Des Moines, Iowa. Most World War I commanders pointed to this program as the main reason that black

officers were commissioned that they felt did not meet Army standards, resulting in sub-par performances by those officers as a group. To prevent a reoccurrence of this, the Army maintained that black officer candidates must go through the same training as white officer candidates.⁸³

Southern politicians vehemently opposed this integrated training. After the first OCS classes of World War II showed that blacks made up less than half of one percent of all candidates, a few civil rights activists also advocated for segregated officer training. However, the vast majority of the civil rights groups continued to support integrated officer training and the Army's position was that establishing separate officer training for blacks would require an inefficient duplication of resources.⁸⁴ Revealingly, the Army cited military efficiency as the justification for this integrated training program while it also touted military efficiency as the justification for maintaining other segregated training programs. Undoubtedly, the small population of black officer candidates expected made this training program somewhat unique, but this is evidence that military efficiency was interpreted through the lens of a broader Army agenda.

Conclusion

The Army navigated the tremendous growth that occurred during its mobilization period with a policy of segregating white and black soldiers into separate units. The Army based this policy on the belief that segregation best ensured military efficiency and that the Army was not the appropriate venue to attempt an experiment with social integration. In 1942, the War Department General Staff described segregation to General Eisenhower as essential to maintaining morale and harmony of both white and black soldiers. The Army felt that segregation as practiced by the Army involved the separation

of equal military units and nothing in its policies or practices amounted to discrimination.⁸⁵

By 1943, two things became evident that challenged the Army's rationale for its use of segregation. First, the application of Army policies and practices in the segregated force negatively impacted the manning and training of black units and the effectiveness of officers in black units. This contradicted the Army's claim that maintaining segregation was in the best interests of military efficiency. Second, civil rights activists continued to use their increasing political acumen to influence the Roosevelt administration, Congress and growing segments of the public. Much of the effort of these civil rights activists was directed at working to overturn the Army's segregation policies. The number of elected officials that intended to use the Army to test social change was growing, despite the Army's opposition to such a role.

The Army was certainly aware of the efforts of politicians and civil rights activists to overturn its policies, as a General Staff member assessed in 1942 that the Army's "policies have practically eliminated the colored problem, as such, within the Army. If they can be maintained without political or civil interference, they will achieve the objective of a balanced and efficient force in which colored and white alike will have equal responsibilities and respect."⁸⁶ The Army's position was further bolstered by a report issued in July 1943 detailing the results of a survey conducted by the War Department's Office of War Information. This survey concluded that white America strongly supported segregation in the Armed Forces and in society as a whole.⁸⁷

¹Ulysees Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 1966), 48.

²Stetson Conn, *Highlights of Mobilization, World War II, 1938-1942* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 1959), 2.

³Lee, 415.

⁴L. D. Reddick, "The Negro Policy of the United States Army 1775-1945," *Journal of Negro History* 34, no.1 (January 1949): 17.

⁵Salter, 57-58.

⁶Reddick, 24.

⁷Ibid., 24.

⁸Lee, 17.

⁹Lee, 5-8.

¹⁰Cable from General John Pershing to General Peyton March, 19 June 1918, in *War Letters*, ed. Andrew Carroll (New York: Scribner, 2001), 140.

¹¹Johnnie J. Atkins, "The Army as a Profession of Choice for Black Americans in World War II: Assessing the Impact on Future Force Structure" (Strategy Research Project, US Army War College, 2001), <http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ada391128> (accessed 14 November 2010), 2.

¹²Memorandum from V.A. Caldwell to Assistant Commandant, General Staff College, 14 March 1920, in *Segregation Entrenched*, vol. 4 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, ed. Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard Nalty (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1977), 342.

¹³Lee, 19.

¹⁴Mershon and Schlossman, 15-16.

¹⁵Converse et al., 25.

¹⁶Memorandum for the Commandant, The Army War College, 30 August 1924, in *Segregation Entrenched*, vol. 4 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 353.

¹⁷Ibid., 353

¹⁸Ibid., 354.

¹⁹"The Use of Negro Manpower in War," 1925, Army War College Curricular Archives, Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, PA, <http://ahecwebdds.carlisle>.

army.mil/awweb/main.jsp?flag=browse&msd=1&awdid=91 (accessed 14 November 2010), 5-6.

²⁰Ibid., 7-8.

²¹Mershon and Schlossman, 15.

²²Converse et al., 26.

²³Nalty, 131-132.

²⁴Lee, 48-49.

²⁵Donaldson, 112.

²⁶Booker, 49.

²⁷Lee, 68-69.

²⁸Ibid., 71-75.

²⁹Ibid., 89-91.

³⁰Letter from Paul McNutt to Henry Stimson, 17 February 1943, in *Segregation Entrenched*, vol. 4 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 131.

³¹Letter from Henry Stimson to Paul McNutt, 20 February 1943, in *Segregation Entrenched*, vol. 4 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 133-134.

³²Letter from Henry Stimson to Paul McNutt, in *Segregation Entrenched*, vol. 4 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 137.

³³MacGregor, 26.

³⁴Ibid., 100-104.

³⁵Lee, 179-180.

³⁶The 8th Illinois Infantry Regiment (Illinois National Guard) was redesignated as the 184th Field Artillery Regiment when it mobilized to active duty. The 369th Infantry Regiment of the New York National Guard was redesignated as the 369th Coastal Artillery Regiment when it mobilized to active duty.

³⁷Lee, 191-192.

³⁸Ibid., 214-218.

- ³⁹MacGregor, 36-37.
- ⁴⁰Lee, 188.
- ⁴¹*Ibid.*, 217.
- ⁴²*Ibid.*, 231-232.
- ⁴³*Ibid.*, 219.
- ⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 214.
- ⁴⁵E. T. Hall, Jr. "Prejudice and Negro-White Relations in the Army," *The American Journal of Sociology* 52, no. 5 (March 1947): 402.
- ⁴⁶Lee, 221.
- ⁴⁷Hall, 402.
- ⁴⁸Lee, 184-188.
- ⁴⁹MacGregor, 36-37.
- ⁵⁰Lee, 188.
- ⁵¹*Ibid.*, 221-224.
- ⁵²*Ibid.*, 225.
- ⁵³Mershon and Schlossman, 29.
- ⁵⁴Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and The Struggle for Racial Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 100.
- ⁵⁵The Poll Tax was a requirement to pay a fee in order to vote in a federal election. The Grandfather clause was an exception to the Poll tax and literacy requirements that allowed illiterate people or those that could not pay the tax to vote if they could prove that their grandfathers had been eligible to vote. Since the vast majority of the black population's grandfathers had been slaves, they could not vote.
- ⁵⁶American Civil Liberties Union, "Voting Rights Act Timeline," <http://www.aclu.org/voting-rights/voting-rights-act-timeline> (accessed 18 July 2010).
- ⁵⁷Klarman, 101.
- ⁵⁸Nalty, 137.

⁵⁹Walter White represented the NAACP, A. Phillip Randolph represented the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and T. Arnold Hill had previously worked at the Urban League.

⁶⁰Nalty, 138.

⁶¹Donaldson, 105.

⁶²Nalty, 140-141.

⁶³Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Executive Order 8802," U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission, <http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/history/35th/thelaw/eo-8802.html> (accessed 17 July 2010).

⁶⁴MacGregor, 3.

⁶⁵Mershon and Schlossman, 96.

⁶⁶Ibid., 97.

⁶⁷Donaldson, 109-110.

⁶⁸MacGregor, 40-41.

⁶⁹Phillip McGuire, "Desegregation of the Armed Forces: Black Leadership, Protest and World War II," *The Journal of Negro History* 68 (1983): 151.

⁷⁰Lee, 97-98.

⁷¹Converse, 30.

⁷²Booker, 46-47.

⁷³Lee, 241-242.

⁷⁴Dalfiume, 97.

⁷⁵Nalty, 225-226.

⁷⁶Lee, 243-245.

⁷⁷MacGregor, 31-32.

⁷⁸Converse, 30.

⁷⁹Lee. 99-100.

⁸⁰Lee, 107,

⁸¹Converse, 30.

⁸²Lee, 108-110.

⁸³MacGregor, 46-49.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 50-51.

⁸⁵Memorandum for General Eisenhower from Brigadier General R. W. Crawford, 2 April 1942, in *The Segregated Army*, vol. 5 of *Blacks in the Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, ed. Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard Nalty (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1977), 160.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 161.

⁸⁷Memorandum 59 from Survey Division, Officer of War Information, 8 July 1943, in *The Segregated Army*, vol. 5 of *Blacks in the Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 190.

CHAPTER 3

BLACK COMBAT UNITS IN ACTION DURING WORLD WAR II

Overview

The Allied forces achieved several significant victories in 1943, such as the successful neutralization of the Japanese stronghold at Rabaul and the surrender of the Italian government.¹ However, the Allies also faced daunting challenges in 1944, including the invasion of France, defeat of German forces in Italy and fighting the Japanese military across more than 2,500 miles of the Pacific. An additional challenge that the US Army faced in 1944 was the employment of black combat units in overseas combat duty. Prior to 1944, only a small number of black combat units had deployed overseas and most units that had deployed overseas were utilized in support roles. However, this would change in 1944 and 1945, as a combination of manpower shortages, progressive leadership and domestic political pressure resulted in the Army committing black units from all of its combat branches to combat action in the European, Mediterranean and Pacific Theaters of Operation. This occurred despite the prevailing belief by War Department and Army leadership that the black race did not possess the characteristics necessary to fight and win on the battlefield. While some black combat units did not perform well when given this opportunity, as a whole, the performance of black combat units offered definitive proof that black soldiers possessed bravery, aggressiveness, and the ability to lead during combat.

Allied Operations in World War II During 1944 and 1945

In order to fully appreciate the contributions of black combat units in World War II, it is necessary to place those actions in context of the progress of the war for Allied forces during 1944 and 1945. This next section attempts to establish this context through a brief recounting of some of the significant campaigns, operations and accomplishments in the European, Mediterranean, and Pacific theaters.

Mediterranean Theater of Operations

Originally designated the North African Theater of Operations, the Mediterranean Theater of Operations (MTO) encompassed “the Azores, Canary and Cape Verde Island groups, and surrounding Atlantic waters; French-held territories of northwestern Africa; Italy; south coast of France; Iberian Peninsula; and Mediterranean Sea and its islands as far east as Adriatic Sea.”² In September 1943, the Allied forces launched the invasion of Italy, with the objectives of forcing Italy out of World War II, preventing Germany from reallocating forces from Italy to either France or Russia and securing airbases for use in striking Germany and the Nazi forces in the Balkans. Despite the surrender of the Italian government following the Allied capture of Sicily in 1943, Germany reinforced Italy with a significant number of German troops under the command of Generalfeldmarschall Albert Kesselring.³

In January 1944, the Allies were engaged in fighting up the Italian peninsula against German forces who were occupying a defensive line, known as the Winter Line, centered on the town of Cassino. Despite the successful execution of an amphibious landing behind the Winter Line, at Anzio, by the US VI Corps, German reinforcements continued to thwart General Mark Clark and his 5th Army’s attempts to achieve a

penetration in the Winter Line. German forces also successfully committed their reserve to sealing VI Corps in at the Anzio beachhead. This stalemate continued until May 1944.⁴

After winter weather forced a halt to further offensive operations, the Allies renewed the fighting at the Winter Line in May 1944, finally achieving a successful penetration of the German defenses. In June 1944, the Allies captured Rome and German forces withdrew to their final defensive position at the Gothic Line in the North Apennines mountain range. Allied forces conducted offensive operations from August through November 1944 to penetrate the Gothic Line. By the time the Allies achieved this penetration, winter set in once more, forcing an operational pause in offensive operations that lasted for several months.⁵

In April 1945, the Allies mounted their final offensive in the MTO to exploit the breakthrough in the Gothic Line. In four weeks, US and British forces sped through the Gothic Line and encircled the remaining German forces while other units pushed through to the Po River Valley. On 2 May 1945, German forces in Italy formally surrendered.⁶

European Theater of Operations

In the European Theater of Operations (ETO), Allied forces spent the first half of 1944 continuing the build-up of forces, amphibious assault training and other tasks required to support the launch of Operation Overlord. On 6 June 1944, the Allies launched the invasion of France at Normandy. Despite incurring significant casualties in securing the beachhead at Normandy, within three weeks, the Allies seized Cherbourg and increased the size of the beachhead to twenty miles.⁷

The Allies quickly built combat power in France and, at the end of July 1944, breached German defenses at Saint Lo, with 1st (US) and 3rd (US) Armies quickly

exploiting this breach. Allied forces defeated the first German attempt at a counterattack, encircling German forces at the Battle of the Falaise Pocket. Simultaneously, 7th (US) Army, along with free French forces from North Africa, executed an amphibious landing in southern France. These operations forced German troops in southern France to begin to withdraw.⁸

After liberating Paris on 25 August 1944, the immediate objective for Allied forces became securing additional ports on the English Channel in order to alleviate their growing ground lines of communication which still originated at the beaches of Normandy. In September 1944, Allies captured the ports of Brest, France and Antwerp, Belgium; however it would take several months before either could support Allied shipping. Meanwhile, the Allies faced German troops occupying prepared defenses in the inhospitable terrain around the Moselle and Meuse Rivers; the Vosges Mountains in the border region of Alsace; the dense woods and hills of the Ardennes; the dense woods of the Huertegen Forest and the fortifications of the Maginot and Siegfried Lines.⁹

The Allies opened the Port of Antwerp in November 1944 and launched an offensive to reach the Rhine River, which stalled in December 1944. On 15 December 1944, 9th (US) Army was positioned at the Roer River east of Aachen on the western flank of the British 21st Army Group, 1st (US) Army was positioned near Bastogne, 3rd (US) Army was positioned near Metz preparing to strike against German defenses arrayed along the Siegfried Line, the 7th (US) Army was in the Vosges Mountains and the 1st (French) Army was in Alsace. Since the defeat at the Battle of the Falaise Pocket, Germany had been developing a plan for a counteroffensive in the Ardennes with the objectives of defeating the Allies on the Western front and allowing Germany to focus its

efforts on the Eastern front. The Germans assigned twenty-eight divisions to Operation Wacht Am Rhein.¹⁰ The operational objective of this counterattack was to push through the Ardennes to cut off and destroy the 1st (US) and 9th (US) Armies and the British 21st Army Group and then recapture the port of Antwerp.¹¹

The Germans launched their counterattack on 16 December 1944. Despite being caught by surprise and undermanned, with three inexperienced divisions and two reconstituting divisions, the Allied forces managed to defend and hold critical terrain at Monschau, St Vith and Bastogne in the Battle of the Bulge. By the end of January 1945, the German counterattack stalled without achieving a breakout of the Ardennes.¹² The Germans launched a diversionary attack in the Vosges Mountain in Alsace in January 1945. Named Operation Nordwind, the Germans committed seven attrited divisions and one SS division from Finland to attack the 6th (US) Army Group. The objective of the German forces was simply to attrit the Allied Forces. This attack was defeated at the Battle of the Colmar Pocket.¹³

From January to March 1945, Allied forces conducted an offensive to advance to and cross the Rhine River. After successfully crossing the Rhine River, the Allies' next objective was to breach German defenses and capture the Ruhr Valley, the heart of Germany's remaining industry. Soviet forces were also closing quickly in on Berlin. After the fall of Berlin and Adolph Hitler's suicide, the German government surrendered to Allied forces on 7 May 1945.¹⁴

Pacific Theater of Operations

In the Pacific Theater of Operations (PTO), the Joint Chiefs of Staff set the following objectives: obtain control of the South China Sea; establish a foothold on the

China coast in order to interdict Japanese LOCs; and finally, establish bases to support aerial bombing, naval blockade, and land invasion of Japan. The Combined Chiefs decided on two lines of advance across the Pacific to achieve these objectives. One line of advance, the Central Pacific campaign led by Admiral Nimitz, consisted of establishing bases on the Marshall, Mariana, and Ryukus Islands in order to launch B29 bomber attacks against Japan. The second line of advance, the Southwest Pacific campaign, consisted of using the islands on the north coast of New Guinea to establish a foothold in either the Philippines or Taiwan. General Douglas MacArthur led the Southwest Asia Campaign.¹⁵

From November 1943 to February 1944, Admiral Nimitz's forces captured Makin and Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands and Majuro, Kwajalein, and Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshall Islands. This put the campaign several months ahead of projections. Meanwhile, in December 1943, MacArthur's Southwest Pacific forces captured the Admiralty Islands and established additional bases in New Guinea also several months ahead of previous planning timelines. The speed of Allied operations was in part due to an operational shift from previous years in the PTO. Instead of attacking Japanese strong points to attempt to dislodge and halt Japanese advances in the Pacific, Allied forces began to bypass these strong points and capture nearby islands with weaker defenses. Once captured, the Allies established air bases and used airpower to isolate and neutralize the bypassed strong point. During the Central Pacific and Southwest Pacific campaigns, Allied forces leapt from island chain to island chain, bound only by the operational range of their aircraft.¹⁶

In April 1944, Nimitz used the Pacific Fleet to support MacArthur's assault on Hollandia and Aitape on New Guinea. Nimitz captured the Marianas Islands in June 1944

and the Palaus Island in September 1944 while MacArthur continued to establish bases at Wadke and Biak, along New Guinea's north coast. The Japanese Navy was forced to continually shift and split resources to combat this fast-moving two-pronged attack, losing the ability to mass their forces against either Nimitz' or MacArthur's forces. In September 1944, the Southwest Pacific campaign captured Morotai with the 31st Infantry Division, while the Central Pacific campaign landed the 1st Marine Division in the southern Palaus.¹⁷

After much debate between MacArthur and Nimitz, the Joint Chiefs decided to invade the Philippines instead of Taiwan by the end of 1944, and then turn the Pacific Fleet north towards Iwo Jima and the Ryukus in early 1945. The naval battles of the Philippine Sea and Leyte Gulf resulted in resounding defeats for the Japanese Navy and the loss of naval effectiveness for the remainder of the Pacific war. From January to June 1945, the Southwest Pacific Campaign fought Japanese forces in the Philippine Islands while the Central Pacific forces captured Iwo Jima and Okinawa.¹⁸

By May 1945, the US had secured bases that enabled Allied forces to launch bombing raids against mainland Japan. However, most Japanese soldiers believed that surrender was worse than death, so despite the speed of advance from island chain to island chain, the Allies had to leave combat power on captured islands to protect bases and mop up bypassed Japanese forces. On 8 August 1945, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan.¹⁹ Later that month, the United States attacked Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atomic bombs and the Japanese government surrendered days later.²⁰

Utilization of Black Combat Units

Army units began to deploy overseas for combat after the United States entered World War II as a member of the Allied Powers following the 7 December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. Very few of the black combat units that completed training in late 1942 and 1943 shipped overseas for duties. For instance, by December 1943, the Army unit inventory included two black infantry divisions, the 92nd and 93rd Infantry Divisions, and five additional black separate infantry regiments (the 24th, 366th, 367th, 368th, and 372nd Infantry Regiments) in its ranks.²¹ Of these, only the 24th Infantry Regiment deployed overseas prior to 1944, and despite deploying to the Southwest Pacific in April 1942, the 24th Infantry Regiment performed support duties until January 1944.²² The 24th Infantry Regiment was not unique as other black combat units that deployed overseas found themselves performing support duties or converted into service units. This created a political backlash that further ignited the debate over the role of blacks in the Army.

In early 1942, the General Staff began compiling a list of which units had completed training and were prepared to deploy overseas. Several black units were on this list, including one black combat unit, a field artillery regiment. However, once the War Department began to deploy units to various overseas theaters, black units were not among those that departed. For the next eighteen months, the rate of overseas deployment of black units was negatively affected by the unwillingness of foreign governments to allow black soldiers into their countries and the unwillingness of theater commanders to employ black combat units.

At that time, the War Department's practice was not to deploy black units into any country that did not agree to the State Department's request to receive the unit. Many foreign governments refused to grant permission to station black soldiers within their borders. These governments included the British West Indies, Australia, Chile, Venezuela and Panama. Almost universally, these refusals came because these governments did not want black soldiers presenting examples of comparatively affluent and empowered people of color to the native populations of their colonial holdings.²³ Ironically, black soldiers fighting to gain equal rights in the Army were looked upon as a threat to spark civil rights activism in other native populations.

Another factor that slowed planned deployments of black units was the refusal of many overseas commands to utilize these units. While the War Department did not require concurrence from theater commanders before dispatching forces, in reality, theater commanders were responsible for generating requirements and had significant influence over how those requirements were resourced. Numerous examples exist in which theater commanders submitted requests for forces that specified white units only and when informed that black units were the only ones available, either cancelled the requests or insisted that the War Department find white soldiers to fill the requirement. Fulfilling these requirements often required converting a white unit from one type to another or sending an available black unit to replace a white unit conducting a state-side mission in order for that white unit to deploy overseas.²⁴ Some theater commanders, notably Lieutenant General Delos C. Emmons in Hawaii and General Douglas MacArthur in the South Pacific, committed to taking black units if the War Department chose to send them.²⁵

During 1943, the black press and civil rights activists began to express dismay over the slow rate of deployment of black units overseas, particularly the lack of any black combat units. Black America still believed that the key to utilizing military service to advance social change lay in the performance of combat units.²⁶ Walter White expressed civil rights activists and black America's view of the difference between serving in service units and combat units to the War Department in 1944 when he stated, "Men who carry shells get no recognition. At Anzio [Italy] there is greater danger on the beach, but it is not possible to dramatize that kind of work."²⁷

Another developing manpower practice provided further cause for concern among blacks. As the Army occupied additional territory overseas, a shortage of service and support units developed. Organizational changes instituted in 1943 coupled with the difficulty in committing black combat units overseas created a surplus of black combat units, specifically headquarters at the regimental and brigade level. The Army began to convert these surplus units into service and support units, urged on by General Marshall's guidance to "quit catering to the negroes' desire for a proportionate share of combat units. Put them where they will best serve the war effort."²⁸ This practice continued through the end of 1943 with the addition of some black combat units deploying overseas to perform service and support missions without a permanent conversion of unit type. In January 1944, this practice came to a head when the 2nd Cavalry Division was deployed overseas to Egypt but converted into service units upon its arrival at the overseas destination. As word of this action trickled back to black newspapers and civil rights activists, it touched off a hailstorm of indignation. This reaction occurred for two reasons: one, the 2nd Cavalry Division was one of only three black combat divisions. If the Army

did not intend to commit it to combat duty, then that did not portend well for the rest of Army's black combat units. The second reason was the fact that the subordinate units of the 2nd Cavalry Division were the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments of Buffalo Soldier fame. These regiments held a special place in the hearts of blacks, many of whom were dismayed that the Army had converted those historically famous combat units into service units.²⁹

Outcry over the lack of opportunity for black combat units to fight for the nation culminated when Secretary of War Henry Stimson sent a letter to Congressman Hamilton Fish of New York explaining why black combat units had been converted to service units. Stimson's explanation stated that due to the large number of black soldiers in the lower grades of the AGCT, these combat units had proved unable to master the employment of modern weapons.³⁰ The black press seized on this, which they perceived as the War Department stating that blacks were not smart enough to fight. Civil rights activists spoke out against what they perceived as a concerted government effort to ensure that black combat units did not get the opportunity to fight. Civil rights activists increased their campaigns to overturn segregation, offering the conversion of the 2nd Cavalry Division as proof that integration was the only way that blacks would gain opportunities in the Army.³¹ In addition, the Republican Party began to court the black vote in anticipation of the 1944 Presidential election, speaking out against the lack of opportunity for black combat units to serve in combat.

In the aftermath of these developments, various members of the Roosevelt Administration began to press for commitment of black combat units to combat duty. Eleanor Roosevelt urged the War Department to send a black combat unit overseas.

Truman K. Gibson, Special Assistant to the Secretary of War for Civilian Affairs also recommended decisive action to commit a black combat unit into the fight. Deputy Secretary of War John McCloy, head of the War Department's Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policies, recommended to both Secretary of War Stimson and General Marshall that the War Department override the desires of theater commanders and direct the use of black combat units. In March 1944, Stimson met with the General Staff and developed a plan to employ both the 92nd and 93rd Infantry Divisions in combat.³² The political backlash of this issue caused Secretary of War Stimson to elevate the employment of black combat units from an operational matter best decided by the Army to a strategic decision that required his personal involvement.

Performance of Black Combat Units

The result of Secretary of War Stimson's decision was that black units from every combat branch in the Army received the opportunity that many black soldiers had been waiting for: the chance to prove their worth in combat. Senior leaders at the War Department and in the Army doubted that blacks would fight, continuing to believe that the black race inherently lacked qualities required to serve as effective combat soldiers. This attitude was displayed by Undersecretary of War Robert Patterson's observations in 1944 that the 92nd Infantry Division had not attained the level of performance that he had seen in white divisions, but that the Division could not be expected to do more with the "material" that it was working with.³³ When called into combat, some black combat units excelled while others performed poorly. However, by the end of World War II, black combat units had clearly demonstrated that black soldiers could and would fight as courageously as any other American.

During World War II, the Army's discussion about blacks in combat focused on three key points. One point of discussion was whether blacks possessed the aggressiveness and discipline required to fight when faced with the destructive power of the contemporary battlefield. A second point of discussion was whether blacks possessed the intelligence necessary to function on an increasingly technical battlefield. The third point of discussion centered on the best way to effectively lead black soldiers. It is with these three points of emphasis in mind that the following examination of the black combat units during World War II is conducted. This examination focuses on the role, accomplishments and performance of units from the Army's combat arms branches (with the exception of the Army Air Corps) during World War II.

Coast and Anti-Aircraft Artillery

In 1943, the Army separated coast artillery into coast artillery and antiaircraft artillery. The mission of coast artillery units was to provide temporary harbor defenses and protect overseas bases.³⁴ Antiaircraft artillery units were designed to protect friendly troops and bases from attack by enemy aircraft, utilizing large searchlights and large caliber (37mm and 40mm) automatic weapons for this purpose.³⁵

While coast and antiaircraft artillery battalions were deployed to the European and Pacific theaters, the Pacific theater received a much larger number due to two factors. First, the large number of bases established to support the island hopping campaigns in the Pacific created many requirements for protecting those bases. Second, the Army Air Corps achieved and maintained air superiority over the Luftwaffe in Europe in 1944.³⁶ More than 12,000 black soldiers served in nineteen coast and antiaircraft artillery battalions in the PTO.³⁷ Only one black antiaircraft artillery battalion served in the

ETO.³⁸ Black units in both coast and anti-aircraft artillery proved themselves during combat in both theaters.

The 452d Anti Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion deployed overseas to England in 1942 where it spent almost two years defending English military installations. In July 1944, the 452d deployed to Normandy under the command and control of XII Corps and provided antiaircraft protection for the beaches at Normandy and the field artillery battalions assigned to the Corps. On 23 August 1944, fifteen German planes attacked the positions of the 191st Field Artillery (FA) Battalion. The 452d repelled the attack, shooting down two and damaging four of the German planes with no injuries or damage suffered by the 191st.³⁹

The 452d also supported XII Corps during the Battle of the Bulge and the drive to the Rhine River in the spring of 1945. The Germans became increasingly desperate to halt the progress of Allied units and greatly increased the amount of Luftwaffe activity. The 452d had 133 engagements with enemy aircraft in March 1945, resulting in the unit destroying forty-two aircraft and damaging twenty-three. In one week long stretch, the 452d demonstrated its proficiency. On 17 March 1945, the 452d was one of nine antiaircraft artillery battalions protecting the 4th Armored Division as it established a crossing site over the Nahe River near Bad Kreuznach, Germany. German aircraft attacked the 4th Armored Division's crossing site. A white antiaircraft artillery battalion attached to the 4th Armored Division shot down twelve German planes, while the 452d covering the rear of the Division's formation, shot down eight planes.⁴⁰ On 20 March, more than 200 German planes attacked the 4th Armored Division's positions during the course of the day. Allied forces shot down thirty six of these planes, with the 452d

accounting for twelve of those downed enemy planes. Two days later, on 22 March, elements of the 452d were protecting the 5th Infantry Division as it emplaced a bridge across the Rhine River at Oppenheim, Germany. Antiaircraft artillery units shot down nineteen German planes that day, with the 452d receiving credit for ten of those nineteen destroyed aircraft.⁴¹

The 49th Coast Artillery Battalion deployed to the New Hebrides Islands of the Pacific theater in late 1942. For fifteen months, the 49th Coast Artillery conducted base security and cross-trained on the use of the 155mm howitzer.⁴² In February 1944, the 49th moved to Bougainville in the Solomon Islands. At Bougainville, the 49th conducted field artillery missions in support of Allied forces defending against an attack by the Japanese 6th Division. Between February and July 1944, the 49th fired more than 13,300 rounds of 155mm and was credited with destroying several Japanese 75mm and 155mm guns with its accurate counter-battery fire.⁴³

Another unit that performed well was the 870th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion. This unit arrived on Okinawa on 10 May 1945. 10th Army directed the 870th to reorganize into an infantry battalion. For twelve days the 870th focused on training, equipping and reorganizing. On 22 May 1945, the unit was stationed on Kerama Island in the Ryukus. The 870th spent the next ninety days fighting bypassed Japanese forces still on the island, killing seventy Japanese soldiers and capturing hundreds more.⁴⁴

The soldiers of black coast and antiaircraft artillery units proved themselves as capable as any white soldiers on the battlefield. These units demonstrated courage and aggressiveness, particularly in incidents that resulted in one award of the Distinguished Service Cross and five awards of the Silver Star. First Lieutenant Robert Peagler, 870th

Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions in leading a company-sized assault against Japanese forces in a heavily fortified position overlooking the 870th's base of operations.⁴⁵ The soldiers of the 452nd Anti Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion developed a reputation for consistently braving enemy fire to assist wounded soldiers from the units that they were providing air defense for. Staff Sergeant William Campbell, Technician Fifth Class Yeno Ellis, Private First Class Edward Swindell, Private First Class Willie Jackson and Private Samuel Johnson were all awarded the Silver Star medal for evacuating wounded soldiers from Field Artillery detachments receiving heavy volumes of incoming fire.⁴⁶ The 14th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Command in the Pacific sent reports to higher HQ that remarked on the calm that 49th Coast Artillery Battalion's soldiers displayed in staying at their positions ready to fire even when under enemy artillery fire.⁴⁷

The accomplishments and abilities of these black coast and anti-aircraft artillery units did not go unnoticed. XII Corps considered the 452nd one of the top artillery units in the ETO.⁴⁸ In October 1944, the 452nd had eight subordinate elements providing anti-aircraft protection in Holland, Belgium and Germany.⁴⁹ The 14th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Command also reported that during its time on Bougainville, the 49th "made an excellent record in combat firing."⁵⁰ These units earned these accolades even as the 49th and 870th assumed missions that they had not been trained for prior to deployment, learning and developing the appropriate tactics, techniques and procedures on the fly.

Field Artillery

The Army fielded at least nine different types of field artillery battalions, differentiated by type of cannon (howitzer versus gun), size, and mode of transportation

(self-propelled versus towed).⁵¹ Nine black non-divisional field artillery battalions were deployed overseas into combat, all in the ETO. Corps artillery units supported and reinforced divisional fires.⁵² These black field artillery battalions consisted of six battalions equipped with M1 155mm howitzers towed by trucks, two battalions equipped with eight inch howitzers towed by tractors and one battalion equipped with four and a half inch guns towed by tractors.⁵³

Non-divisional black field artillery battalions arrived in the ETO between mid-1944 and early 1945. These units participated in the major campaigns of the end of World War II in Europe, including the Battle of the Bulge, Rhineland and Ardennes-Alsace campaigns. As the war in Europe wound down in 1945, several of these field artillery battalions were retasked with security missions that limited their opportunities in combat. The performance of the field artillery battalions demonstrated the capability of black soldiers in a highly technical and demanding combat arms branch.

The 969th Field Artillery Battalion landed at Utah Beach on 9 July 1944 and supported the breakout from Normandy, including the siege of the port city of Brest, through September 1944. In October 1944, the 969th moved with the 8th Infantry Division to the Bastogne area.⁵⁴ In December 1944, when the German counteroffensive in the Ardennes began, the 969th supported the 101st Airborne Division. The 969th incorporated the artillery pieces and crews of several other battalions that had suffered severe losses in the initial days of the German attack. As 101st Airborne Division defended Bastogne, the 969th provided reinforcing fires until 12 January 1945.⁵⁵

The 999th Field Artillery Battalion experienced a great deal of combat in the last year of World War II. The 999th landed at Normandy on 17 July 1944 and supported

operations to cross the Seine and Mosel Rivers during the breakout of Normandy as part of XV Corps. In October and November 1944, the 999th moved with XV Corps to the Vosges Mountains in Alsace and supported assaults to capture the towns of Savene, Strasbourg and Sarneburg. In December 1944 and January 1945, the 999th supported the 3rd and 36th Infantry Divisions in Alsace.⁵⁶

In January and February 1945, both the 969th and 999th served in support of the 1st French Division during operations to clear German forces out of the Colmar Pocket. From February through April 1945, the 969th supported XXI Corps and the 4th Infantry Division in the advance across the Rhine River while the 999th returned to France to support the French Army of the Atlantic in attacking German forces holding the harbor at Bordeaux.⁵⁷

The 578th Field Artillery Battalion is a third black artillery unit that maintained a combat role in each of the major campaigns in the last year of the war in Europe. The 578th saw its first combat action in the Ardennes during the Battle of the Bulge. After the initial days of the German offensive, the 578th joined III Corps artillery in setting up in firing positions to provide reinforcing fire for units reinforcing Bastogne. From these positions, the 578th placed accurate fire on German troops, tanks and in one case, leveled a Wehrmacht-occupied town.⁵⁸

Following the Battle of the Bulge, the 578th spent February and March 1945 supporting the 4th Infantry Division as it advanced to the Rhine River. After crossing the Rhine on 30 March 1945, the 578th's role changed. The pace of the advance across the Rhine made it increasingly difficult to utilize its heavy eight-inch howitzers. During the

month of April 1945, the 578th was used as infantry, clearing the woods at each stop to locate bypassed German soldiers.⁵⁹

Due to increasing success against German forces in 1945, several black field artillery units that entered the ETO in 1945 were retasked from their combat roles to supporting roles. The 686th Field Artillery Battalion and the 350th Field Artillery Battalion entered the ETO in early 1945. Both battalions provided artillery support as part of XXI Corps' drive to the Rhine River, but in April 1945, these units were tasked with security duties of critical installations as the Army began to transition to an occupation force in parts of Germany.⁶⁰

The cost of war and the flaws in the Army's force generation processes did take a toll on one black field artillery unit. The 333rd Field Artillery Battalion arrived in France on 30 June 1944 as part of 8th Corps Artillery.⁶¹ During the breakout from Normandy, the 333rd earned a reputation as a highly proficient unit, once firing 1,500 rounds in one twenty-four hour period and on another occasion capturing a German-held town when it arrived there before the infantry did.⁶² In December 1944, the 333rd was one of the units sent to the Ardennes to help blunt the German offensive. During the Battle of the Bulge, more than half of the 333rd's howitzers were destroyed by enemy fire and the unit incurred the most casualties of any unit in VIII Corps Artillery. With the lack of replacements for black combat units, the 333rd became combat ineffective and its remaining personnel and equipment was used to help reconstitute the 969th. The 333rd Field Artillery Battalion would not receive sufficient replacements to reconstitute until April 1945.⁶³

The soldiers in black field artillery units proved to be skilled, brave and resourceful on the battlefields of World War II. When the 101st Airborne Division was ordered to release attachment of the 969th Field Artillery Battalion, Major General Maxwell Taylor praised the performance of the unit and nominated it for the Distinguished Unit Citation, only the second black combat element to receive such a nomination.⁶⁴ During its operations in the Vosges Mountains, the 3rd Infantry Division Artillery commander praised the 999th Field Artillery Battalion for its “extraordinary display of ingenuity and hard work.”⁶⁵ The 578th Field Artillery Battalion earned praise from the 4th Infantry Division Artillery commander for “effective and prompt fire” support.⁶⁶ Upon the completion of operations in the Colmar Pocket, the 969th and 999th both earned praise from the First French Division Commanding General and were granted the right to incorporate the arms of the city of Colmar into their unit insignia.⁶⁷

In an interesting development that attested to the ability of black combat units to lead, on multiple occasions white field artillery battalions were placed under the command and control of black field artillery group headquarters. These group headquarters exercised control over three field artillery battalions, often a mix of black and white units, to provide the right mix of capabilities. Only one shortcoming of this command relationship was recorded and that was in the form of a request from a black field artillery group for assignment of a white chaplain in case the soldiers of its white field artillery battalions requested a chaplain of their own race.⁶⁸

Tank Battalions

In 1940, the War Department directed the Armored Force to activate three black tank battalions. From 1941 through 1943, the Armored Force activated and trained these

black tank battalions at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana.⁶⁹ No group of black soldiers did more to prove their abilities on the battlefield than the black tank battalions. These three battalions demonstrated courage, aggressiveness, skill and leadership that drew the admiration of soldiers from private to general in every unit they supported.

Separate tank battalions were designed as self-sufficient units capable of providing armored support to any infantry division. Originally, separate tank battalions consisted of three tank companies: A, B and C Companies each with three tank platoons and a headquarters platoon. A tank company had a total of seventeen tanks. Tank battalions also had a service company and a headquarters company. The service company provided all logistics and maintenance support for the battalion while the headquarters company contained a reconnaissance platoon and assault gun platoon with four self-propelled 75mm howitzers and an armored 81-mm mortar platoon.⁷⁰ When the Armored Force fielded the M4 Sherman medium tank to armored units, each battalion added a D Company that retained the M5 Sheridan and the mission of conducting reconnaissance.⁷¹ During this fielding, the assault gun platoons also upgraded to 105mm howitzers from 75mm howitzers. The M4 Sherman, with its 75mm cannon, represented a significant upgrade in firepower that the tank battalions took advantage of.⁷²

Volunteers, either from newly inducted soldiers or soldiers already serving in other career fields, served as the primary source of manning for the black tank battalions. Some black soldiers accepted reduction in rank from non-commissioned officer to private in order to serve in a tank battalion. However, there was no special selection process that identified specific backgrounds, qualifications or characteristics for service in the black tank battalions. These units exhibited the same demographics as other black units,

specifically a large population of soldiers that scored in category IV or V on the AGCT and, for the most part, lacked formal education.⁷³

The 758th Tank Battalion was activated as the 78th Light Tank Battalion on 1 June 1941 at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. This battalion was equipped with the M5 Stuart light tank, armed with a 37mm anti-tank cannon and three .30 caliber machine guns. The M5 required a four person crew (tank commander/loader, driver, assistant driver and gunner) to operate the tank effectively.⁷⁴ The M5's light armor proved incapable of stopping German munitions and its 37mm cannon lagged far behind German and other European tanks. By 1944, the M5 was reduced to a reconnaissance role in the European Theater.⁷⁵ When the Armored Forces fielded the M4 Sherman medium tank to replace the M5, the 758th Tank Battalion did not receive this upgrade.⁷⁶

On 17 November 1944, the 758th Tank Battalion arrived in Italy and was attached to the 92nd Infantry Division. On 24 December 1944, the 758th was alerted for movement to the front lines. The 758th's M5 proved obsolete for fighting the Germans. The M5's 37mm cannon did not have adequate range to engage targets in the mountains of northern Italy and its front armor was insufficient to protect the crew from German tanks and anti-tank weapons.⁷⁷ While supporting 92nd Infantry Division's Operation Fourth Term, the 758th Tank Battalion found itself trying to negotiate its way across the coastal plain of the Cinque Canal. The unit was eventually sent back due to the lack of trafficability and to avoid drawing further fire to the infantry.⁷⁸ During Operation SECOND WIND in April 1945, the 758th Tank Battalion supported the 370th Infantry Regiment's attack on Massa and provided fire support for the 442nd Infantry Regiment's attack on Mount Belvedere.⁷⁹

The second black tank battalion, the 761st Tank Battalion, activated on 1 April 1942 at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. Arguably the most distinguished and famous of black combat units, the 761st Tank Battalion stands as proof of the capabilities and performance of black soldiers that could be unleashed when positive leadership was applied and the stigma of segregation and racism is left outside of the unit. The 761st appointed its first black company commander in June 1943 when First Lieutenant Irvin McHenry assumed command of Company C. In July 1943, Major Paul Bates assumed command of the battalion. Admitting that he had never encountered blacks until he joined the Army, Bates felt that he held no preconceptions about the abilities or work ethic of black soldiers. His positive leadership was demonstrated in the case of Second Lieutenant John “Jackie” Robinson who got into a confrontation with a civilian bus driver for refusing to move to the back of a public bus. Pressured to court-martial Robinson, Bates refused. Though Robinson was eventually court-martialed and acquitted when he was transferred to another unit by the installation commander, Bates’ stand showed where he stood on segregation and Jim Crow.⁸⁰

In June 1944, the 761st was placed on alert for overseas movement as the ETO requested additional tank units in the aftermath of the Normandy invasion. The 761st arrived in England on 8 September 1944 and landed at Omaha Beach, Normandy on 9 October 1944, assigned to the 26th Infantry Division, XII Corps, 3rd (US) Army. Within their first month in France, both Major General Paul Willard, commanding general of 26th Infantry Division and General George Patton, commanding general of 3rd (US) Army addressed the 761st to outline the need for more armored units and their expectations and beliefs that 761st would succeed in their combat mission.⁸¹

From 8 November to 3 December 1944, the 761st Tank Battalion supported the 26th Infantry Division in northern France, providing armored support during the capture of nine towns. The unit saw its first combat action when staging for its first combat mission. The battalion's staging area was struck by an artillery barrage and then attacked by a German patrol. All of the unit's tank crews held their position except for the battalion Executive Officer, who ordered his tank to withdraw. The battalion commander was wounded in this attack and would not return for three months due to the severity of his injuries.⁸² Also on 8 November, Staff Sergeant Ruben Rivers demonstrated the bravery of the soldiers of 761st Tank Battalion when he exposed himself repeatedly to heavy enemy fire in order to remove a roadblock on the avenue of approach to the unit's first objective. Staff Sergeant Rivers was awarded the Silver Star for his actions.⁸³ In another instance, during the assault on Moreville-les-Vic, Technician Fourth Class James Whitby reentered a burning tank and used its machine gun to lay suppressive fire that provided a group of infantry soldiers with time to reorganize.⁸⁴

During the attack on Moreville-les-Vic, anti-tank guns hidden in buildings disabled seven Company C tanks. The company's senior non-commissioned officer, First Sergeant Samuel Turley, quickly organized the crews of the disabled tanks into combat crews and fought off several German attacks. German artillery fire eventually forced these crews to take cover in a tank ditch. The battalion's headquarters company launched a relief force with the tanks from the battalion headquarters providing security to the assault gun and mortar platoons. These platoons provided fires that suppressed the German artillery and forced a German reinforcing element moving towards Moreville-les-Vic to withdraw after suffering five destroyed vehicles.⁸⁵

The soldiers of the 761st Tank Battalion quickly showed that they would not back down from a fight. On multiple occasions, crews in disabled tanks would move to other tanks in order to continue fighting. Staff Sergeant Ruben Rivers exemplified this. From 10 to 12 November 1944, Company A supported the 101st Infantry Regiment in attacks on the towns of Guebling and Bougaltroff. Staff Sergeant Rivers' tank struck an anti-tank mine and he suffered a broken leg. Refusing morphine, Staff Sergeant Rivers had a medic treat his leg and moved to a different tank. The following day he led the advance into Guebling and established a position to cover the advance into Bougaltroff. He once again refused evacuation to the aid station because he suspected that a German counterattack would come the next day. On 12 November, German anti-tank and machine guns engaged the assault element advancing into Bougaltroff. Staff Sergeant Rivers led his platoon in providing covering fire for the withdrawal of the assault element and then remained in place under heavy fire, until he was killed in action, to allow the other section of his platoon to withdraw.⁸⁶

In the 761st's initial month in combat, the 26th Infantry Division commanding general stated that the 761st Tank Battalion "supported this division with great bravery under the most adverse weather and terrain conditions."⁸⁷ The XII Corps commanding general commented that "I consider 761st Tank Battalion to have entered combat with such conspicuous courage and success as to warrant special commendation."⁸⁸ In December 1944, 761st Tank Battalion moved to the Ardennes with the 87th Infantry Division to reinforce Allied forces. The 761st supported the 87th Infantry Division in the capture of the towns of Rondu, Nimbermont, Bonneru, Recogne, Remagne, Jenneville and Tillet in a ten-day period. The 113th Panzer Brigade occupied fortified positions in

the town of Tillet. During the attack on Tillet, the 761st inflicted 150 enemy casualties and destroyed an ammunition supply point, three anti-tank guns, eight machine gun nests and a Panther tank.⁸⁹

The 761st also supported the 17th Airborne Division in the Ardennes during the capture of the towns of Watemall, Gouvvy, Hautbillan, and Thommen. In one instance, Company C and the 194th Glider Regiment pursued a German unit performing rear guard for units retreating through Luxembourg. Company C destroyed a machine gun nest, an anti-tank gun and killed thirty-five enemy soldiers. The commanding general of the 17th Airborne Division, Major General William Miley, assessed the support provided by the 761st Tank Battalion as effective, helpful and far better than the support received from previous units.⁹⁰

During February and March 1945, the 761st supported four different divisions during operations in the Netherlands.⁹¹ In March 1945, the 761st was attached to the 103rd Infantry Division as it attempted to penetrate the defenses of the Siegfried Line in the vicinity of Climbach, France. In the 103rd Infantry Division's assaults on the towns of Nieder Schlettenbach and Riesdorf, Company C, 761st Tank Battalion destroyed nineteen fortified pillboxes, twelve machinegun nests, killed forty-three German soldiers and captured another forty prisoners. The 103rd Infantry Division demonstrated a great deal of trust in the 761st Tank Battalion when it formed Task Force Rhine, a force designed to quickly exploit any penetration of the Siegfried Line and drive to the Rhine River. Task Force Rhine, under the command of the 761st Tank Battalion, consisted of 2nd Battalion, 409th Infantry Regiment, 761st Tank Battalion, Reconnaissance Platoon, 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion, 103rd Signal Company and an engineer detachment.⁹²

From 22 to 29 March 1945, Task Force Rhine fought across forty-five kilometers, from Climbach, France to Munchweiler, Germany. Under the command and control of the 761st Tank Battalion, Task Force Rhine utilized combined arms warfare, with tanks leading the way, artillery suppressing and destroying anti-tank guns and infantry following behind to clear buildings and secure towns. The 103rd Infantry Division commanding general, Major General Anthony McAuliffe, sent a note to Task Force Rhine that said “the first stage of our operation has been brilliantly completed. You broke through the famous Siegfried defenses and then boldly exploited your success . . . You have fought gallantly and intelligently and you have led all the way.”⁹³

On 30 March 1945, the 761st was attached to the 71st Infantry Division who had encircled the German 6th SS Mountain Division. On 2 April, the 6th SS Mountain Division attempted to counterattack but was rendered combat ineffective in desperate battles in Buches, Budingen, Coburg, Kulmbach, and Bayreuth. During these battles, units of the 761st continued to distinguish themselves. During these engagements, Company B destroyed a German tank, fifteen machine gun nests, killed 200 German soldiers and captured 200 more. Company C destroyed nineteen German vehicles, nine machine gun nests and killed more than 100 German soldiers as well as forcing the surrender of two German battalions.⁹⁴

The 761st Tank Battalion’s final combat action came as it supported the 71st Infantry Division’s advance south through Germany to the Austrian border. From 19 to 28 April 1945, the 761st advanced more than 150 miles, assisting in the capture of thirteen German towns from Neuhaus to Regensburg. While the 761st officially ceased combat operations on 6 May 1945, after 183 consecutive days, by the end of April it had

begun to transition to occupation duties. During its time in combat, the 761st Tank Battalion provided the Army, the War Department and the world with multiple examples of the bravery, aggressiveness, and leadership abilities of black soldiers.

The third and final black tank battalion of World War II was the 784th Tank Battalion. The 784th Tank Battalion activated on 1 April 1943 and on 30 October 1944 shipped out of New York, bound for England. On 22 December 1944, the 784th Tank Battalion landed at Rouen, France.⁹⁵ Upon arrival in France, the 784th was attached to the 104th Infantry Division for the defense of their positions on the Roer River. On 3 February 1945, 784th Tank Battalion was attached to the 35th Infantry Division. In its AAR, the 35th Infantry Division stated that “we received the 784th Tank Battalion which soon proved itself as an effective, courageous and dependable unit which earned the respect and admiration of the infantrymen who worked together well with the tankers.”⁹⁶

The 35th Infantry Division’s mission was to attack and create a penetration of the German Siegfried Line. The 784th Tank Battalion provided direct fire support during operations in the Roehr River Valley. The 784th quickly developed a partnership with the infantrymen of the 35th Infantry Division to clear the fortifications of the Siegfried Line. To clear these carefully prepared fortifications, the tank company would fire rounds from its main gun into the pillbox. Combat engineers then placed explosive charges in the pillbox and infantry cleared the pillbox.⁹⁷

Once across the Roehr River, the 784th supported 35th Infantry Division as it took the towns of Gerderath, Fronderath, and Gerderhahn. The 137th Infantry Regiment After Action Review revealed that “the regiment received excellent work from Co B, 784th Tank Battalion, a Negro unit which was attached to the 137th for this operation . . .

the work of Company 'B' 784th Tank had been exceptional all day, and the Negro tankers supported the regiment in an excellent manner all day.”⁹⁸ In March 1945, 35th Infantry Division formed Task Force Byrne to liberate the town of Venlo in Holland and then move towards the Rhine River and capture the town of Drupt, Germany. The 784th Tank Battalion served as the lead element and flank security for the task force. Task Force Byrne captured more than twenty small towns as it advanced to Venlo.⁹⁹

After the relatively unopposed capture of Venlo, Task Force Byrne and the 784th Tank Battalion turned to the east towards Sevelen. While moving toward Sevelen, one unit encountered a tank ditch covered by artillery fire blocking their avenue of advance. Sergeant Walter Hall drove his bulldozer tank into the artillery barrage and remained exposed to a large amount of artillery fire while he filled the ditch in enough for the unit to keep moving.¹⁰⁰ An advance party from Task Force Byrne reached Sevelen and entered without encountering enemy resistance. The Germans waited for the advance party to enter the town and then destroyed the bridge on the main route of advance into the town, isolating the advance party from the rest of the Task Force Byrne. The advance party consisted of Company D, 784th Tank Battalion; Assault Gun Platoon, 784th Tank Battalion; one platoon of medium tanks and one infantry platoon. Despite this task organization, the 320th Infantry Regiment recorded that the “Company I platoon and Negro tankers who attacked Sevelan at night were isolated from the rest of the column when the Germans blew up a bridge . . . In house-to-house fighting the men had largely cleared the town by morning . . . Sevelen was secured despite the deadly observed fire from mortars and artillery just outside the town.”¹⁰¹

Task Force Byrne continued its advance toward the Rhine River. The 784th supported the capture of Kamperbruck, Alspray and Bauern. During the assault on Kamperbruck, Technician Fifth Class David Adams dismounted his tank and entered a burning building where he evacuated several wounded infantrymen. Sergeant Douglas Kelly commanded a crew that remained in their disabled tank until it caught fire and its ammunition began to explode. He then dismounted his tank and rather than seek cover, moved on foot through small arms and mortar fire to the friendly artillery command post. Sergeant Kelly provided coordinates for the enemy anti-tank guns. Both soldiers received the Bronze Star for their bravery.¹⁰² At Millegen, 784th tanks attempted to enter the town three times and each time were rebuffed by obstacles overwatched with concealed anti-tank guns. During one attempt, all of the company's officers were casualties, leaving a non-commissioned officer to take charge of the company and continue the battle. This non-commissioned officer did so well that he was later recommended for a battlefield commission and the Silver Star.¹⁰³

Company A, 784th Tank Battalion became part of Task Force Murray on 5 March 1945. Task Force Murray's mission was to capture Ossenberg, cross the Rhine and capture Wesel. Both Task Forces Murray and Byrne reached the banks of the Rhine River on 10 March 1945 and were removed from the front lines to reconstitute. The Task Force Byrne commander, Colonel Bernard Byrne, commented that "those tankers gave a good account of themselves and our doughs [infantrymen] say they can fight with them anytime. They stay right up with the doughs and the foot soldiers like that."¹⁰⁴ The 784th went to Teglen, Holland to train replacements on the basics of tank warfare. A lack of a replacement system for black soldiers in combat units meant that the battalions had to

train their own replacements. The battalion demonstrated its adaptability and versatility. A shortage of replacements caused the battalion to adjust the manning in tank crews; unable to maintain the proscribed five-soldier crew for each tank, the 784th eliminated one and sometimes two positions from tank crews, meaning that other members had to perform those duties as well.¹⁰⁵

At the end of March 1945, the 784th found itself in support of the 35th Infantry Division once again. This support continued over the next month as the 35th Infantry Division crossed the Rhine River and advanced through the Ruhr Valley, capturing five more towns. One soldier in the 35th Infantry Division referred to the 784th Tank Battalion as “the Tuskegee fellers of the Armored Groups.”¹⁰⁶ In April 1945, the 784th supported the 17th Airborne Division’s capture of the towns of Oberhausen and Mulheim. Finally, the 784th Tank Battalion finished the war supporting 35th Infantry Division efforts to police up bypassed German units.¹⁰⁷

Tank Destroyer Battalions

Black tank destroyers battalions exhibited the range of performance during combat. One unit received the Army’s most prestigious unit award while another black tank destroyer battalion was eventually removed from combat duties due to indiscipline and ineffectiveness. These battalions also demonstrated the good and bad characteristics of the Army’s process of fielding segregated black combat units. Camaraderie and leadership that spanned racial boundaries, determination to prove themselves and adaptability were some of these characteristics that are evident in the successes of these black tank destroyer battalions. Racism, lack of confidence in the Army’s intentions

towards black combat units, and failures in the Army's institutional training and manning systems were factors in the failures of these units.

The US Army established tank destroyers as its own branch in June 1941 after much debate on how best to manage the development of doctrine, training and force generation for anti-tank operations. This debate was especially urgent in light of the German success in armored warfare in 1939 and 1940. More lightly armored than tanks, tank destroyers used mass, mobility, firepower and aggressiveness to accomplish their missions of reconnaissance, preemptive contact with enemy armored formations and destroying tanks.¹⁰⁸ MG A. D. Bruce, first head of the Tank Destroyer Center, described his vision of tank destroyer tactics:

The destroyer's gun and mount don't have the tank's armor, but its crew commands greater speed, visibility and maneuverability, and at least equal firepower. It can pick the time and place to deliver its punch and then hightail it to a new position to strike again. One good tank destroyer can be produced for materially less than the cost of a tank, and in far less time and with less critical material. And by using tank destroyers to stop enemy tanks, you leave your own tanks free to dash through and spread hell among the enemy.¹⁰⁹

During World War II, the Army activated 106 tank destroyer battalions. Of these, eleven were black units. Of these eleven black tank destroyer units, eight were converted to service units.¹¹⁰ The three remaining black tank destroyer units deployed overseas for combat duty in 1944. The 614th and 827th Tank Destroyer Battalions deployed to the ETO while the 679th Tank Destroyer Battalion saw its combat in the MTO.¹¹¹ By 1944, the tank destroyer was utilized on the battlefield to find and destroy enemy tanks and to provide direct or indirect artillery fire in support of infantry.¹¹²

Tank destroyer battalions were organized into three tank destroyer companies, designated as A, B and C companies; a service company; and a headquarters company

that included a reconnaissance platoon and 81-mm mortar platoon. Tank destroyer companies consisted of three gun platoons, each equipped with four tank destroyers, for a total of twelve guns per company. Tank destroyer companies also had their own reconnaissance platoons. Tank destroyer battalions were typically attached to divisions for employment with one tank destroyer company task organized to each regiment within the supported division.¹¹³

The 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion became the first black tank destroyer battalion deployed overseas for combat. Activated in July 1942, the 614th landed at Utah Beach in Normandy on 8 October 1944 equipped with M6 three-inch anti-tank gun towed by M3 half-tracks.¹¹⁴ The battalion commander and four other senior officers in the staff were white while the remainder of the battalion, including all five company commanders and the platoon leaders, were black.¹¹⁵ During eight months of combat, the 614th received campaign participation credit for the Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace and Central European campaigns.¹¹⁶

On 28 November 1944, the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion was committed to combat, supporting the 3rd Cavalry Group in defending XX Corps northern flank along the Siegfried Line. In its first combat engagement, the 614th recorded three direct hits on German pillboxes and destroyed a German anti-tank gun.¹¹⁷ On 5 December, the 614th moved to north-eastern France to support the 103rd Infantry Division's advance into Germany, serving as short-range direct fire support. In this role, the 614th destroyed German forward observers and sniper positions, often emplaced in high ground such as church steeples.¹¹⁸

When the 103rd Infantry Division reached the Maginot Line, it encountered heavy German resistance. During one of these battles, elements of C Co, 614th proved their courage and aggressiveness. The 411th Infantry Regiment formed a Task Force with the mission of capturing and holding the town of Climbach in order to cut the German forces lines of communications. Third platoon, C Company, 614th's mission was to advance into Climbach, serving as a diversionary effort to distract attention from the flanking attack by an infantry company and tank battalion. Despite suffering 80 percent casualties and loss of all but one gun from enemy artillery, mortars and small-arms fire, the tank destroyers accomplished their mission, drawing the focus of the defensive force and allowing the infantry company to successfully infiltrate the flanks and capture the town. First Lieutenant Charles Thomas, the commander for C Company, 614th received the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions in leading the mission and refusing medical evacuation despite multiple wounds. Four Silver Star and nine Bronze Star medals were awarded to other soldiers for valor and the platoon received the Distinguished Unit Citation, becoming the first black unit to achieve this recognition.¹¹⁹

In December 1944 and January 1945, the 614th continued to support the 103rd Infantry Division as it fought to hold its ground in the Vosges Mountains. During this time period, the 614th not only served as tank destroyers, but also functioned as artillery and infantrymen.¹²⁰ When the German Army launched Operation NORDWIND as part of its counterattack in the Ardennes, the 614th demonstrated its versatility and adaptability. In the span of five weeks, the 614th had three different combat engagements. In the first, a German patrol attacked an outpost of A Company, 614th. The ensuing engagement resulted in nine German casualties and two German prisoners of war. A Company

suffered no casualties. In the second combat engagement, a tank destroyer section from C Company scored 139 direct hits out of 143 rounds fired in less than an hour during an attack on an enemy outpost. In the third engagement, the 614th conducted a dismounted raid on a German outpost in order to capture prisoners for interrogation. The results of the raid were eight enemy casualties, six enemy prisoners captured and no friendly casualties.¹²¹

In March to May 1945, the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion continued to support the 103rd Infantry Division during the Allied offensive across Germany. Continuing to demonstrate great adaptability, the 614th provided direct fire support during the capture of towns and conducted dismounted attacks to capture the towns of Bischoltz and Kindwiller. During the attack on Kindwiller, when the company commander was seriously wounded, he instructed his senior non-commissioned officers to complete the mission. The element's platoon sergeant took command and led the successful capture of the town, to include taking nine German prisoners of war.¹²² This is an example of how the soldiers of the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion answered the charge that black non-commissioned officers were incapable of leading effectively.

The 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion, the second black tank destroyer battalion to serve in combat, represented almost the polar opposite of the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion. Plagued by problems from the unit's activation, it is somewhat surprising that the Army deactivated other black tank destroyer battalions while retaining and ultimately committing this unit to combat. The 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion demonstrates the debilitating effect that segregation had on units, the negative effects of poor leadership and how the lack of an Army system for generating replacements for black combat units

could leave these units with large groups of personnel that were at best indifferent to soldiering.

The 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion was activated in April 1942 and deployed to France in November 1944. This was after the War Department cancelled the 827th's previously scheduled movement to the PTO in the spring of 1944 because the unit had been rated as untrained.¹²³ The thirty months between the 827th's activation and movement overseas were extremely turbulent. The battalion underwent four major changes in equipment and the replacement of all of its company grade officers on two occasions.¹²⁴ The battalion also suffered from a pattern of ineffective leadership, with eight different battalion commanders serving during this time.¹²⁵

The 827th's experience in training foreshadowed problems that would plague the unit in combat. During its two and a half years of training and preparation, the battalion failed five evaluations by the Army Ground Forces. When retested in August 1944, Army Ground Forces waived its requirement that tank destroyer battalions train on delivery of indirect fire. Even though the battalion successfully completed its sixth evaluation, the battalion's officers were convinced that their non-commissioned officers were poor leaders and the soldiers incapable of conducting tasks such as maintaining communications, reading maps, or maintaining their vehicles.¹²⁶

Two factors that may have impacted the battalion's training and leadership are the changes in equipment and officers. As units in combat provided feedback, tank destroyer technology constantly evolved, resulting in new equipment fielded to units both in training and already overseas. The 827th began training on 75mm towed anti-tank guns and then fielded in succession-the M10 self-propelled three-inch anti-tank gun, the M6

towed three-inch anti-tank gun and finally the M18 self-propelled 76mm anti-tank gun.¹²⁷

The crew of a towed anti-tank gun consisted of ten soldiers while the crew of a self-propelled anti-tank gun system was only five soldiers. Operating and maneuvering a tank destroyer required careful coordination and teamwork amongst the members of these crews.¹²⁸ It is not a stretch to imagine that constant changes in crew composition and requirements hinder the ability of the unit to succeed in unit maneuvers and evaluations.

The changes in officers occurred for similar reasons. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Army activated most black units with all or predominantly white officers. As black officers began to graduate from Officer Candidate School in increasing numbers, the white company grade officers in black combat units were replaced with black OCS graduates. One of the battalion commanders of the 827th, decided upon assuming command, that the unit's problems stemmed from poor leadership by these black officers and had all of his black officers replaced with white officers. Many of these officers came from deactivating tank destroyer battalions and entered into their service with the 827th with no hope for the future of the unit. When the unit did not improve after this change back to white officers, the senior officers of the battalion concluded that the blame for the battalion's issue must lie with the enlisted soldiers.¹²⁹ Again, it is no surprise that such wholesale turnover in personnel, especially three sets of platoon leaders, negatively impacted the development of the non-commissioned officers and leadership of soldiers.

The 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion entered combat in late December 1944, attached to 12th Armored Division in the Vosges Mountains. The 12th Armored Division was part of the 7th (US) Army's reserve. The 827th's senior leaders displayed their racist

attitudes at this time, refusing an offer from the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion to assist by providing an orientation of the area. Despite the fact that the 614th had been operating in this area for several weeks, the 827th's leadership refused because the 614th's officers were black.¹³⁰ Despite not facing any combat engagements, the 827th experienced problems with keeping its soldiers with their tank destroyers as many of them would leave their vehicles to gather firewood to start warming fires.¹³¹

On 6 January 1945, the 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion was reassigned to Task Force Wahl, 79th Infantry Division, VI Corps. Task Force Wahl's mission was to conduct a counterattack in response to the beginning of the German offensive Operation NORDWIND. During its tenure with Task Force Wahl, the 827th provided further proof of the depth of its leadership and discipline problems. Indiscipline manifested itself in multiple incidents. There was a shooting incident between a lieutenant and one of his soldiers when the lieutenant attempted to break up a fight between two soldiers. In another incident, a soldier attacked his First Sergeant, and that same First Sergeant wounded a bystander when he fired his sidearm at his attacker. Finally, one company missed its movement timelines when the company commander reported that seventy-five percent of his unit was absent without leave and the remaining twenty-five percent was intoxicated.¹³² Leadership issues also manifested during combat. Concerned that infantry commanders might send tank destroyers on tasks for which they were not suited, the officers of the 827th directed their soldiers to only execute orders that came from an officer in the battalion. During combat, this not only stifled any initiative that the non-commissioned officers of the battalion may have felt but it also put those non-

commissioned officers in conflict with the supported infantry units as the infantry tried to point out targets.¹³³

Even a unit as plagued with problems as the 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion achieved some successes in combat. On 9 January 1945, B Company supported the 68th Armored Infantry Regiment in halting an enemy advancing toward the towns of Rittershoffen and Hatten. At Rittershoffen, the 827th engaged and destroyed eleven out of sixteen German tanks and one tracked infantry carrier vehicle. At Hatten, the 827th teamed with elements of the 813th Tank Destroyer Battalion to destroy nine of fifteen German tanks. That evening, two tank destroyers from 827th became isolated in the town of Hatten but continued to battle German troops, destroying several vehicles and inflicting casualties. The next day, 827th elements destroyed four more German tanks in Rittershoffen.¹³⁴

At the same time, the actions of another unit served as a microcosm of the positive and negative within the 827th. The battalion sent another company to the town of Oberroedorn in response to a request for tank destroyer support from the 313th Infantry Regiment. When the unit reached Oberroedorn, the commander realized that only two of his twelve tank destroyers arrived at the destination. After dispatching personnel to search for the missing tank destroyers, the company commander took cover within an infantry pillbox during an ongoing German attack, removing himself from contact for more than three hours. When he emerged, he found seven of his tank destroyers already positioned. Two destroyers required recovery after sliding off of an icy road, one was disabled by enemy fire and two remained unaccounted for. In the ensuing battle, some tank destroyers fought, while the crews of others hid in nearby houses. Those that did

fight found themselves in conflict with the supported infantry commanders as they waited for the officers of the company to confirm targets.¹³⁵

Eventually the VI Corps Inspector General conducted an investigation into the training and discipline of the 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion. Initially, the investigators interviewed only officers in the battalion. Every officer told investigators that they doubted if the 827th could ever become a reliable tank destroyer unit because their soldiers were “untrainable, slow in their reactions or stricken by fear.”¹³⁶ Some officers did state that most of their soldiers were reliable and what was lacking was a replacement system that could provide trained soldiers to allow them to remove those soldiers that were not reliable. Ironically, as these officers provided these assessments of their soldiers, elements of the 827th were still fighting in the streets of Rittershoffen and Hatten. At Rittershoffen, the 827th used their tank destroyers to flush out German infantry using buildings to provide cover and in Hatten, the 827th destroyed two more German tanks.¹³⁷

The 6th Army Group directed the VI Corps Inspector General to go back and interview enlisted soldiers of the 827th. While this occurred, the 827th was removed from Task Force Wahl and reattached to 12th Armored Division, where it saw little action. Three days after arriving at the 12th Armored Division’s area of operations, the battalion commander of the 827th requested assistance because he could no longer control the enlisted soldiers of the battalion, whom he claimed were molesting civilians.¹³⁸ Molesting civilians was a common complaint used by many white soldiers in Europe when confronted with black soldiers having social contact with white European women. The Inspector General team interviewed twelve enlisted soldiers, serving in duty positions as

platoon sergeants, crew commanders and each of the crew positions in March 1945. After these interviews, the inspectors concluded that the enlisted soldiers displayed adequate knowledge of their duties and technical skills such as map reading and first aid but did not appear to want to return to combat. This assessment was based on the slowness in answering the question when it was put to them. The soldiers' actual responses were a variation of expressing willingness to return to combat if it was with a "good division like the 79th [Infantry Division]." ¹³⁹ The 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion spent the remainder of World War II conducting guard duty, housekeeping and transportation support for the 6th Army Group and was identified as surplus to requirements. Ironically, both the V Corps and 7th Army commanding generals recommended disbanding the unit or converting it to a service unit despite the Inspector General's recommendation to retain the unit as a tank destroyer battalion. ¹⁴⁰

The 679th Tank Destroyer Battalion was the third and last black tank destroyer battalion to serve in combat. Activated at Camp Hood in June 1943, the 679th deployed overseas to France in January 1945. In March 1945, the 679th was transferred to the MTO in March 1945. ¹⁴¹ The 679th participated in the Northern Apennines and Po Valley campaigns in Italy. ¹⁴²

Upon arrival in Italy, the 679th Tank Destroyer Battalion was attached to the 92nd Infantry Division. ¹⁴³ The 679th supported the 92nd Infantry Division during the assault to capture the La Spezia Naval Base and the subsequent advance and capture of Genoa. ¹⁴⁴ As Allied forces breached the Gothic Line, part of the carefully crafted German defenses was an array of large coastal defense guns positioned on the cliffs of Punta Bianca near the Ligurian coast. These guns were well protected in the cliffs behind large steel doors

that only left them exposed when the Germans fired them. From 15 to 19 April 1945, the 679th concentrated the fires of all thirty-six guns in the battalion, firing at coordinates provided by forward observers who could see the smoke trail of the large guns each time they were fired. After four days of firing, the 679th finally silenced those guns. In late April, 679th, in conjunction with three battalions of artillery, were positioned to repeat this operation on Mount Moro, overlooking the Italian port city of Genoa.¹⁴⁵

The black tank destroyer battalions demonstrated both the highs and lows of service in World War II. Many soldiers displayed courage and aggressiveness while others were not up to the rigors of combat. These soldiers also displayed that they were more than capable of mastering the intricacies of operating technology in the form of the tank destroyer and its constantly evolving doctrine. Finally, poor leadership and organizational turbulence can have a devastating effect on any unit and that could have been even more the case with the segregated black combat units of World War II.

Infantry

Outside of the two black infantry divisions, the US Army maintained an additional five separate infantry regiments and in the final months of the war established fifty three infantry platoons in the ETO. Two separate infantry regiments, the 24th and 366th Infantry Regiments, saw combat action during World War II as well as all of the infantry platoons. The infantry has been the main fighting force of the Army throughout its existence and no branch of the Army held greater significance in the fight of black soldiers to prove their worth.

The 24th Infantry Regiment was one of two black infantry regiments in the active Army when World War II began. In the initial years of mobilization, it provided much of

its leadership to serve as cadres for the activation of other black units. In 1942, the 24th Infantry Regiment was filled to authorizations by soldiers transferred from the 25th, 367th and 368th Infantry Regiments and deployed to the PTO in April 1942. The 24th deployed to Efate islands, in the New Hebrides Island chain and conducted perimeter defense duties until October 1942. From October 1942 to August 1943, 24th Infantry Regiment conducted support duties such as labor, road construction, installing wire and driving trucks on Efate and Guadalcanal.¹⁴⁶

In August 1943, the 24th was reconsolidated on Guadalcanal and continued to provide manual labor force. In January 1944, 1st Battalion moved to Bougainville and continued to perform labor duties. In late February 1944, 1st Battalion, 24th began to conduct combat duties with elements of the 37th Infantry Division. 1st Battalion encountered first enemy contact on 11 March 1944, repelling a Japanese probe. For the next two months, 1st Battalion conducted combat operations to clear its area of responsibility of enemy forces. During this time period the XIV Corps Commanding General assessed the 1st Battalion's performance as highly satisfactory.¹⁴⁷

In December 1944, the 24th Infantry Regiment deployed to Saipan and Tinian with the mission of securing the airbases by capturing or killing pockets of bypassed Japanese troops. In April 1945, Major General Elliot D. Cook led a team from the Inspector General to observe the 24th Infantry Regiment conducting mop-up duty. Major General Cook's reported stated that the Regiment's performance was meritorious and also stated that "the morale of this Regiment is high and its discipline is well worthy of emulation and praise."¹⁴⁸ The Inspector General specifically requested that the contents

of his report be sent to the PTO for use in determining the future utilization of black troops. In July 1945, the 24th Infantry Regiment moved to Kerama Island.¹⁴⁹

The 366th Infantry Regiment was activated at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, in February 1941.¹⁵⁰ The 366th provided security in Massachusetts for the next three years. In May 1944, the 366th Infantry Regiment deployed to Italy in order to provide airbase security. On 28 November 1944, the 366th Infantry Regiment was attached to the 92nd Infantry Division to support operations in the advance against the Gothic Line despite the fact that regiment had not trained for an infantry mission in years.¹⁵¹ Tension between 92nd Infantry Division and 366th Infantry Regiment developed immediately. Officers in the 366th pointed out what they thought was overt racism from the 92nd Infantry Division commander towards the regiment because of the large population of black officers on the regimental staff. In December 1944, the regimental commander requested relief from his position due to his treatment by Major General Almond and the division staff.¹⁵²

In December 1944 and January 1945, the 366th Infantry Regiment assumed responsibility for holding the western bank of the Serchio River during the German advance. In February 1945, 366th Infantry Regiment supported 92nd Infantry Division's Operation Fourth Term, a limited objective attack to clear and seize the high ground overlooking the Division's current positions in the Serchio Valley. After three days of fighting, Operation Fourth Term was cancelled as 92nd Infantry Division was unable to advance to the high ground.¹⁵³

Following the failure of Operation Fourth Term, 92nd Infantry Division underwent reorganization. Part of this reorganization affected the 366th Infantry

Regiment. The 473rd Infantry Regiment relieved the 366th Infantry Regiment from its positions in the Serchio Valley on 26 February 1945. The 366th moved back to the Division's training area in order to reconstitute. On 29 March 1945, the 366th Infantry Regiment was released from the command and control of the 92nd Infantry Division and then immediately converted into two engineer service regiments.¹⁵⁴ This conversion occurred at the suggestion of the 92nd Infantry Division's commanding general at a time when shortages of infantry troops had been increasing for a year. It remains a tragic end to a unit with a proud fighting history.

Throughout 1944, a shortfall in infantry replacement soldiers for the ETO became increasingly acute. The War Department's planning factor of a 70 percent casualty rate among infantry proved to fall short of the actual casualty rates incurred in Europe. The infantry casualty rate in the ETO proved to be 90 percent with a 100 percent casualty rate during the period of June and July 1944. As the rate of infantry replacements coming from the United States continued to slow, the calculated infantry shortage was projected to reach 29,000 or the equivalent of all of the rifle companies in two infantry divisions.¹⁵⁵

Officials in the ETO began to execute plans for generating replacements. First, G1 began to reassign infantry from newly arriving divisions to divisions with shortages. Second, Ground Forces Reinforcement Command developed a program to retrain soldiers from service and support units as infantry. 20,000 white service support soldiers were identified for retraining under this program.¹⁵⁶ Finally, Lieutenant General John C.H Lee, commanding general of the Communication Zone of the ETO proposed additionally soliciting volunteers from his black service and support units as well. Lee gained the

concurrence of Generals Eisenhower and Bradley and then published a call to troops on 26 December 1944. The call to troops stated that:

the Commanding General, Com Z, is happy to offer to a limited number of colored troops who have had infantry training, the privilege of joining our veteran units at the front to deliver the knockout blow . . . It is planning to assign you without regard to color or race to the units where assistance is most needed, and give you the opportunity of fighting shoulder to shoulder to bring about victory. Your comrades at the front are anxious to share the glory of victory with you. Your relatives and friends everywhere have been urging that you be granted this privilege.¹⁵⁷

While necessity created the opportunity, Lee seized it because he was morally opposed to the practice of segregation. He admitted as much when Lieutenant General Walter B. Smith, Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, confronted him with concerns that the wording in the call for troops ran counter to the War Department's policy. Smith took his concerns to Eisenhower, resulting in Eisenhower personally rewriting the call to troops to omit any specific mention of black troops.¹⁵⁸

In January and February 1945, the first two thousand black volunteers were conducting training as members of 47th Reinforcement Battalion at Compiègne, France. Upon completion of training, the volunteers were organized into platoons. On 1 March 1945, twenty-five platoons were dispatched to 12th Army Group and twelve platoons went to 6th Army Group. In late March 1945, the second group of volunteer infantrymen was distributed, with twelve platoons assigned to the 12th Army Group and four platoons assigned to 6th Army Group.¹⁵⁹

The volunteer black infantrymen were used for the same missions that the white infantrymen were used for in both the 6th and 12th Army Groups. The main difference in utilization was in method of employment. 6th Army Group assigned the sixteen black infantry platoons it received to 7th Army. 7th Army organized these platoons into four

provisional companies designated as 7th Army Provisional Infantry Companies One through Four. Provisional Infantry Companies One, Two and Three were assigned to the 12th Armored Division while Provisional Infantry Company Four was assigned to the 14th Armored Division. None of the black infantry platoons had received training in planning or executing operations at the company level. The commanders in the 7th Army praised the courage and aggressiveness of the black infantry volunteers in executing operations. The 7th Army's main criticism of the black infantry volunteers that they had received was poor discipline and control within companies. This manifested itself primarily after the battle was over and objective captured. It was not until May 1945 that 7th Army leadership discovered that these issues were a result of the fact that the black infantry platoons had not been designed or trained to operate in companies.¹⁶⁰

The 12th Army Group assigned three black infantry platoons to each of their divisions. In turn, each division typically assigned a platoon to each of their regiments and the regimental commanders would attach their black infantry platoon to one of their infantry companies.¹⁶¹ These divisions and regiments immediately took measures to welcome and began inculcating esprit de corps into these soldiers. Either the division commanding general or his assistant division commander personally welcomed the platoon to the division; they also indoctrinated the newcomers with the division history, provided division patches and insignia to the new soldiers and the regiments conducted additional combat training if time permitted.¹⁶²

The black volunteer infantrymen served primarily in the Allies' final campaign in the ETO of World War II. During a short three-month period, they proved their courage and aggressiveness beyond a doubt. Three members of the black infantry volunteers were

awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for their actions. Private Willy James, serving with the 413th Infantry Regiment, demonstrated valor and courage during a mission to capture a bridge near Lippoldberg. Private James was pinned down by enemy fire for over an hour and used that time to memorize the German defensive positions. When he was able to rejoin his platoon, James helped lead the assault on those positions and then suffered fatal wounds when he tried to move to the assistance of his wounded platoon leader. Private First Class Jack Thomas of the 60th Infantry Regiment earned the Distinguished Service Cross during a mission to destroy an enemy tank. Thomas, serving as a squad leader, used his machine gun, grenades and a rocket launcher to prevent enemy from occupying the tank and then evacuated a seriously wounded soldier despite the heavy barrage of enemy fire.¹⁶³ The third recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross was Sergeant Edwin Carter, who single-handedly destroyed a German machine gun position and mortar position and killed nine enemy soldiers, all despite being wounded eight times.¹⁶⁴

The abilities and accomplishments of the volunteer infantry replacements were recognized by the divisions that they were attached to. The 104th Infantry Division commented of their black infantrymen that “their combat record has been outstanding. They have without exception proven themselves to be good soldiers.”¹⁶⁵ Both Generals Bradley and Hodges expressed satisfaction with the black infantry soldiers. The 78th Infantry Division commanding general wished for additional black infantrymen. The 99th Infantry Division stated that its black infantrymen “performed in an excellent manner at all times while in combat. These men were courageous fighters and never once did they fail to accomplish their assigned mission.”¹⁶⁶

93rd Infantry Division

The activation and deployment overseas for combat of the 93rd Infantry Division marked the return of a black combat unit that carried with it great mystique from World War I, where it fought with French forces to much public acclaim. The 93rd Infantry Division's experiences in World War II showed the effects of the polarization of expectations for black combat units. The black public expected the 93rd Infantry Division to once again show the worth of the black soldier for all to see while white Army leadership expected that the 93rd Infantry Division would prove once for all that the black soldier could not fight. By the end of the war in the Pacific, the 93rd Infantry Division came closer to the success desired by the black public than the failure expected by white Army leaders. However, after being assigned an inglorious, though important, combat role, the 93rd's performance left room for both sides to stake their claims.

The 93rd Infantry Division was activated on 15 May 1942 at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, and consisted of the 25th, 368th, and 369th Infantry Regiments.¹⁶⁷ After completing division maneuvers in the summer of 1943, the 93rd was alerted for deployment overseas.¹⁶⁸ In January and February 1944, the 93rd Infantry Division deployed to the Solomon Islands in the Pacific Theater of Operations.¹⁶⁹

Two trends formed in the mentality of the soldiers of the 93rd Infantry Division during the eighteen months it spent training for combat that would color their perception of their experiences in the Pacific. The first trend was the development of divergent opinions on whether black soldiers should fight in this war. The second trend was the suspicion by some that bigots and racists in the chain of command sought every opportunity to remind black soldiers of their second-class status.

Two schools of thought had formed on the role of the black soldiers in securing civil rights. One school, consisting mostly of veterans who served prior to the start of World War II, felt that combat service was their opportunity to step closer to civil equality. The other school, made up of mostly younger draftees, felt that they should not have to fight in the hopes of gaining something that every other man in American already had.¹⁷⁰ This debate was evidenced by many soldiers' reaction to two things considered by many to be beacons in the early fight for civil rights: the black press and Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis, Sr. In April 1943, Brigadier General Davis visited the 93rd Infantry Division on behalf of the War Department Inspector General and spoke to black leaders and soldiers. He cautioned this group to serve as ambassadors of goodwill and avoid behavior that put them in conflict with the local populace. While some agreed with Davis, others felt that he served as a mouthpiece for the Army and did not represent their interests or views.¹⁷¹ Similarly, when black newspapers continued to push for the chance for black soldiers to fight overseas in order to further the struggle for civil rights at home, most prominently depicted in the rise of the Double V campaign, some soldiers of the 93rd Infantry Division sent letters to these newspapers, chastising them for lobbying for black soldiers to be sent to die fighting for civil rights that they didn't even enjoy themselves. One soldier of the 93rd Infantry Division summed up the dilemma when he wrote to his mother stating that he "did not want to die upholding a system that upheld lynch laws, mob violence, segregation and daily humiliations."¹⁷²

The second trend, racist behavior, began to take root as the 93rd Infantry Division formed. Some of the white, southern officers used to populate the division at its birth, openly displayed their racist attitudes towards their soldiers.¹⁷³ Other reinforcing

activities included punishment of soldiers by the chain of command for infractions that they felt were directly related to the Jim Crow practices of segregation. For instance, segregated public transportation on which blacks were the last priority often resulted in the soldiers returning to post after curfew when given a pass.¹⁷⁴ In another instance, labor shortages led to the Governor of Arizona requesting soldiers from Fort Huachuca assist local farmers in harvesting the cotton crop in 1942. While War Department initially opposed this, President Roosevelt supported it (as long as black and white soldiers both performed these duties) because the war effort had caused the labor shortage. Whatever the reasons, black soldiers saw this as a personal slight as all of them associated picking cotton with slavery.¹⁷⁵ There were multiple instances of black soldiers feigning illnesses and staging sit-down strikes in response to racist behavior.¹⁷⁶

Upon 93rd Infantry Division's arrival in the Pacific, its regiments were dispersed on the Solomon Islands of Guadalcanal, Banika, Vella Lavella and New Georgia. After taking several weeks to download equipment and establish their administrative areas, the 93rd realized how different the jungle environment of the Pacific islands was from the desert of Arizona.¹⁷⁷ In March 1944, the 25th Regimental Combat Team was moved from Guadalcanal to Bougainville.¹⁷⁸ Initially, the 93rd served in a service support role, with the 368th and 369th Regimental Combat Teams conducting port duties on Banika and Guadalcanal respectively and the 25th Regimental Combat Team operating a sawmill on Bougainville. While this assignment was consistent with the experience of the 37th Infantry Division and Americal Divisions, two white divisions that preceded the 93rd Infantry Division, the soldiers of the 93rd resented this duty, viewed through the prism of repeated exposure of racism, as purposely demeaning. This resentment was fueled by the

fact that the black 24th Infantry Regiment had been performing service support duties for twenty months in the Pacific at that point.¹⁷⁹

In March 1944, General George Marshall told Lieutenant General Millard Harmon, commanding general of US Army Forces in the South Pacific, that the Secretary of War had directed the use of black combat units for combat operations and that the utilization and performance of the 93rd Infantry Division would be intensely scrutinized.¹⁸⁰ Lieutenant General Harmon directed the Americal Division to receive the 25th Infantry Regiment as a reinforcing unit. The Americal Division partnered the units of the 25th Regimental Combat Team with its own units in order to execute a phased introduction to jungle combat. Members of the 25th went on patrol with the units of Americal Division, serving as observers or squad members.¹⁸¹

Under the tutelage of the Americal Division, the battalions of the 25th Regimental Combat Team began to conduct combat patrols. 2nd Battalion engaged in multiple skirmishes in which they acquitted themselves well. The Americal Division Artillery commander, Brigadier General William Dunckel, received reports from his forward observers that the 593rd Field Artillery Battalion was placing accurate fires and had done well in emplacing and fortifying their gun positions.¹⁸² However, one incident would overshadow the performance of the rest of the 25th Infantry Regiment and the 93rd Infantry Division.

On 6 April 1944, K Company, 3rd Battalion, 25th Infantry Regiment was conducting its first company operation, establishing a blocking position to capture Japanese soldiers. While conducting a security halt on the way to the objective, Company K was engaged by an enemy element to its front. This resulted in firing in all direction,

catching its own reconnaissance teams in the cross-fire. The situation continued to get worse as the platoons in the company began to separate. The First Sergeant evacuated the wounded to the rear while the Commander sped to the rear to try and improve his situational awareness. Seeing the commander and First Sergeant withdraw, soldiers began to feel as if they had been abandoned and began to withdraw to the rear. The result of this engagement was thirty friendly casualties, including the company executive officer.¹⁸³

Generals MacArthur and Marshall and Secretary of War Stimson were among the military leaders who pointed to the Company K incident as proof that the 93rd Infantry Division experiment had failed. Others, such as Undersecretary of War John McCloy, cautioned patience, comparing this incident to the early struggles of the Army Air Corps' black 99th Pursuit Squadron.¹⁸⁴ This condemnation came despite the fact that the 25th Infantry Regiment commander defended Company K as one of the finest units in the regiment and pointed out that 3rd Battalion was the only element in the regiment that had not been able to conduct joint patrols to improve their ability to operate in the jungle before being dispatched on company operations. He also pointed out that similar incidents had occurred with white units conducting their initial jungle patrols but the black combat units were held to a higher standard.¹⁸⁵ Even XIV Corps leaders acknowledged that 3rd Battalion had not been properly indoctrinated into jungle warfare before it was assigned this mission.¹⁸⁶ Ironically, two days later, another soldier from 3rd Battalion earned the Silver Star for heroism under fire. Private Isaac Sermon was a member of a patrol that encountered an enemy ambush. Despite suffering a serious neck wound, Sermon used his machine gun to provide suppressive fire that killed three enemy soldiers and allowed his patrol to extract itself from the ambush.¹⁸⁷

In June 1944, the 93rd Infantry Division began what would become a series of missions to secure islands seized by other forces in the Southwest Pacific area. Much like the 24th Infantry Regiment, these remained vital missions as the speed of the Pacific campaign often left large numbers of bypassed Japanese soldiers who did not believe in surrender. The presence of these bypassed elements threatened the security of Allied airbases, ports and support bases on these islands unless they were defended. So while inglorious, these missions required combat proven soldiers and were of real value to the war effort. From June 1944 until April 1945, elements of the 93rd Infantry Division conducted this rear area security mission at Bougainville, the Treasury Islands, Muhda, Biak, Wari Islands, Toem and Wadke Islands.¹⁸⁸

In April 1945, the entire 93rd Infantry Division, except for one regimental combat team, was assembled and assigned responsibility for securing Allied installations on the island of Morotai. Not only did Morotai have approximately 600 Japanese soldiers operating on it, the nearby Japanese stronghold of Halmahora had a Japanese garrison of 40,000 soldiers. The 93rd worked with Navy patrol boats to ensure that Japanese reinforcements and supplies from Halmahora could not be landed on Morotai. Elements of the 93rd made history again, by capturing Colonel Kisou Ouchi, commander, Japanese 211th Infantry Regiment. Colonel Ouchi was leading the forces still on Morotai and he was the highest ranking Japanese officer captured before the surrender of Japan.¹⁸⁹

92nd Infantry Division

The 92nd Infantry Division was activated in October 1942 at Fort McClellan, Alabama. While the Division Headquarters and division troops were stationed at Fort McClellan, its subordinate elements were dispersed on multiple posts. The 92nd's

infantry regiments were stationed at Camp Attebury in Indiana, Camp Robinson in Arkansas and Camp Breckinridge in Kentucky.¹⁹⁰ The 92nd Infantry Division consolidated at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, in the summer of 1943, after the departure of the 93rd Infantry Division for maneuvers.¹⁹¹

Major General Edward “Ned” Almond was selected by General Marshall as the commanding general of the 92nd Infantry Division. Almond was born and raised in Virginia and had just spent the last six months as the deputy commanding general of the 93rd Infantry Division. As a southerner with experience in “managing” black soldiers, Almond fit the Army’s profile of the perfect commander of black troops. Some senior officers that knew Almond were surprised at this selection. Brigadier General William Ennis, Jr., expressed his surprise at Almond’s selection for this division “because [Almond] despised the ground that they [blacks] walked on.”¹⁹² Almond’s previous experience consisted primarily of staff and school assignments; he spent only three of his twenty-four years of service in troop-leading positions and all of those had come when he was a Lieutenant and Captain. At this stage in his career, he felt his strengths were organization, detailed planning, ability to design training and fearlessness. Almond also believed that his work in designing the training plan for the newly activated VI Corps was responsible for his rise from the rank of Lieutenant Colonel to Major General in two years.¹⁹³

Almond’s background showed in the poor culture and climate that he developed in the 92nd Infantry Division. This climate followed the 92nd from the desert of Arizona to the mountains of northern Italy. Upon activation of the division, Almond conveyed his vision for the 92nd, identifying his “principal aim is to produce a first-class battlefield

unit.”¹⁹⁴ His methodology for achieving this was the execution of rigorous training on drill, tactics, endurance foot marches, small arms marksmanship, mountain operations, conducting stream crossings, patrolling and combined arms maneuver. This training regimen was designed to produce a “physically toughened efficient battle force thoroughly skilled and imbued with the desire to close and destroy any enemy engaged.”¹⁹⁵

However, Almond’s focus on training could not overcome the negative effects of racism on the morale in the 92nd Infantry Division. Almond stated that he arrived at the 92nd Infantry Division with “no preconceptions about the abilities of Negro troops or the division’s potential.”¹⁹⁶ However, racism quickly manifested itself in several ways. Jim Crow laws and practices served as a constant reminder to black soldiers of their perceived status as second-class citizens. The towns nearest to Fort Huachuca were inhospitable to blacks, requiring blacks to travel farther for recreation opportunities.¹⁹⁷ The unreliability of segregated transportation became a friction point for the soldiers of the 92nd Infantry Division just as it had with the 93rd Infantry Division. Almond, who had established a reputation for winning over southern communities, directed his commanders to ensure that their soldiers obeyed Jim Crow customs and practices.¹⁹⁸ While this directive may have intended to minimize conflict between soldiers and the surrounding civilian communities, black soldiers interpreted it as Army sanction of these practices.

Racism also manifested itself in the leadership and practices of the division itself. Some black platoon leaders were required to enter their company commanders’ offices through the back door. The 92nd Infantry Division spent longer in each phase of its training than the Army Ground Forces model allocated. Almond’s explanation for this

was that it took black soldiers longer to absorb instruction.¹⁹⁹ In fact, Almond and some of the officers on his staff felt that black soldiers were difficult to train because they possessed a lower level of intelligence.²⁰⁰ This coupled with officer personnel practices instituted by Almond that ensured black officers did not serve in senior command positions (battalion and regiment) or on the division staff, led many black officers to conclude that Almond did not believe that any black officer could succeed as a leader.²⁰¹

While racism eroded the morale of the soldiers of the 92nd Infantry Division, Almond often remained unaware of its effects and even when aware, took no action to address it.²⁰² One way that black soldiers demonstrated their unhappiness with their conditions was through malingering. Intelligent, capable and healthy soldiers throughout the division feigned illness and ignorance to the point that they were separated from their units.²⁰³ Almond recalled that the malingering problem “developed suddenly and rapidly grew to large proportions.”²⁰⁴ In the summer of 1943, the General Staff dispatched Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., to Fort Huachuca to investigate the growing numbers of complaints and media reports of poor conditions in the 92nd Infantry Division. Davis reported serious problems in terms of racial conflict between black officers, white officers and black enlisted soldiers. While he found that Army policies caused some of this racial conflict, he also found that Almond failed to recognize the poor morale and command climate issues that faced the 92nd as a result of discrimination and inequality.²⁰⁵ Truman Gibson, Special Advisor to the Secretary of War, echoed Davis’ conclusion when he noted that on a visit to the 92nd Infantry Division, he observed black soldiers booing Almond when he addressed a large group and Almond was surprised and shocked at this reception.²⁰⁶ The impact of the 92nd Infantry

Division's poor command climate was best illustrated by the words of First Lieutenant Vernon Baker, a platoon leader in the division who would become one of its heroes during combat. Baker stated "the black men I knew wanted to get into combat and smash the enemy . . . we wanted to defend our country but at the base camp in the South and overseas in Italy we faced the most vicious kind of racism and that soured a lot of the guys. Sometimes it was hard to tell who the bigger racists were – the Germans in front of us or the commanders behind us."²⁰⁷

In April 1944, the Army notified the 92nd Infantry Division that it would deploy a regimental combat team overseas for combat duty. Major General Almond successfully argued for the deployment of the rest of the division overseas as well for combat duty. On 30 July 1944, the 370th Regimental Combat Team arrived at the port in Naples, Italy. Hundreds of black soldiers from service and support units gathered at the port and cheered when the first elements of the 92nd Infantry Division arrived.²⁰⁸ The remaining units of the division would not arrive in Italy for two more months.

On 24 August 1944, the 370th Regimental Combat Team moved onto the front lines as Allied forces advanced from Rome towards the Arno River. In the regiment's first combat engagement, the 3rd Battalion command post was bombed by enemy aircraft and then attacked by enemy dismounted patrols. 3rd Battalion repelled this attack. On 30 August, the first 370th patrol to cross the Arno River encountered a German patrol, destroying a machine gun nest and capturing two enemy soldiers in the resulting engagement. During September 1944, the 370th Regimental Combat Team participated in the capture of Mount Pisano and the city of Lucca and the crossing of the Arno River and Serchio Rivers. During its initial two months in the MTO, the 370th performed well

enough for the regimental commander to rate it as satisfactory and the IV Corps Commanding General to praise the unit's aggressive patrolling.²⁰⁹

In October 1944, as part of operations to penetrate the Gothic Line, IV Corps directed the 370th Regimental Combat Team to attack and capture the coastal town of Massa, on the western edge of the Gothic Line. Major General Almond and elements of the Division headquarters had arrived and assumed command and control of the 370th by this time. The first objective set for this mission was to seize Mount Cauala, which overlooked the southern routes to Massa. From 6 to 8 October, the 370th launched two assaults against Mount Cauala. Both attacks advanced less than a mile in mud and rain before the 370th's units withdrew. Elements of the 2nd Armored Group, attacking to the 370th's left, also withdrew in the face of heavy artillery fire. On the night of 9 October, 2nd Battalion, 370th attacked up the eastern side of Mount Cauala, seeking to exploit the cover of darkness to minimize the artillery barrage. Elements of 2nd Battalion reached the top of Mount Cauala and held it for approximately three hours before withdrawing in the face of heavy machine gun and mortar fire from both flanks and the front. On the night of 11 October, the 370th attempted another night attack but the lead company withdrew after initial contact with the enemy. The following night, commanders began to report difficulties in getting soldiers to advance or hold their positions during enemy contact. After a week of attempts, the mission was cancelled and deemed by many in the chain of command as a failure.²¹⁰

Almond cited the lack of aggressiveness, tenacity and determination on the part of black soldiers as the primary reason that the mission failed. However, his explanation failed to account for several things. First, the attack on Mount Cauala represented the

370th's first encounter with determined German soldiers in prepared defensive positions. Prior to that, they had engaged units in the process of retreating from one defensive line to another. Second, the condition of the terrain changed considerably as the transition from summer to fall brought heavy rain that turned dirt into mud. Third, Almond's explanation did not explain the actions of several units that advanced and held their positions in the face of tremendous opposition. One unit fought off eight enemy counterattacks and did not withdraw until it ran out of ammunition. In another battalion, two companies held their positions under heavy enemy fire, even after the company commanders were killed. The 370th Regimental Combat Team's executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel John Phelan defended his soldiers: "I have heard of just as many acts of individual heroism among Negro troops as among white. There is no reason to believe that there is any greater lack of individual guts among them."²¹¹

Two incidents that detail the dichotomy of emotions that plagued the 92nd Infantry Division occurred while Allied Forces suspended offensive operations against the Gothic Line for the winter. In October 1944, the remaining elements of the division arrived in Italy. A white officer in the 317th Engineer Battalion was wounded while sleeping in his tent. The distance from enemy lines made it likely that the officer was shot by a member of his unit. An officer from the division's Inspector General investigated the shooting. While unable to determine who fired the shot, the investigator reported the poor command climate in the battalion, caused by perceptions of racial discrimination. His report stated that "the [enlisted men] dislike their officers; the officers dislike each other; and they all seemingly dislike their [Battalion] Commander."²¹²

The second incident demonstrated the courage that existed within the soldiers of the 92nd Infantry Division. By December 1944, the 92nd's area included the Serchio Valley to the east of Massa. Two platoons of the 366th Infantry Regiment, which was placed under the command and control of the 92nd Infantry Division in November, were garrisoning the town of Sommocolonia. On 25 December 1944, hundreds of German troops attacked Sommocolonia and several small towns located nearby. Many of these German troops had infiltrated the area dressed as Italian civilians. First Lieutenant John Fox was an artillery officer in the 366th and established an observation post in Sommocolonia in order to coordinate artillery support. Fox knew that the enemy was close to overrunning the building that his observation post was located in, but refused to evacuate. He called for more artillery fire, eventually calling fire onto his location in order to stop the enemy advance long enough for the units within the town to organize. Fox eventually was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions.²¹³

In February 1945, the 92nd Infantry Division launched Operation Fourth Term. Coming two months prior to the planned Allied assault against the Gothic Line, the objective of this operation was to secure better terrain for the Allies to attack Massa. The desired terrain was the Strettoia hills that would provide clear positions for overwatch on the approaches into Massa.²¹⁴ The division's plan called for the 365th and 366th Infantry Regiments to attack in the Serchio Valley as a diversionary effort while the 370th Infantry Regiment seized the Strettoia hills. The 371st Infantry Regiment would advance on the 370th's right flank and Task Force 1, a tank, infantry and engineer group organized for this operation, would advance north along the coast and cross the Cinquale Canal to protect the 370th's left flank.²¹⁵

From 4 to 6 February, the 365th and 366th advanced steadily against Italian Army units, closing in on their objectives. On 7 February, experienced German infantry units replaced the Italian units and counterattacked, forcing the withdrawal of the 365th. The 366th also withdrew to prevent a seam from opening between the two units. Both regiments eventually reached a stalemate with the German units and both sides held their positions.²¹⁶

On 8 February, the attack to seize the Strettoia hills began. The 371st Infantry Regiment encountered an enemy minefield less than a kilometer into its advance and could not bypass it. Task Force 1 was unable to cross the coastal plain by the Cinquale Canal, as large volumes of fire and the terrain slowed them down. The 370th continued to attack despite the loss of both units on their flanks, seizing the first of three hilltops in the Strettoia hills. A German counterattack on 9 February drove the 370th off the objective they had seized. Fighting on 10 February failed to regain any ground and commanders reported increasing numbers of stragglers leaving the forward lines. Almond cancelled the operation on 11 February.²¹⁷

Following the failure of Operation Fourth Term, Almond relayed to the 5th Army commanding general, Lieutenant General Lucien Truscott that the attacks failed because the black platoon leaders and black enlisted soldiers of the division were unreliable, citing their repeated withdrawals when faced with enemy fire.²¹⁸ Truscott, who had observed part of the operation with Almond, concluded that he could not count on the 92nd Infantry Division in its current form.²¹⁹ On 5 March 1945, Truscott submitted a report on Fourth Term that praised the 92nd Infantry Division's plan, pointing out that the 92nd conducted the operations with twice as much infantry and almost twice as much

artillery as the German force defending their objectives. Truscott identified infantry units' inability to advance against enemy fire and engineers' inability to clear minefields as the primary causes of failure of the operations.²²⁰

Infantry and engineer officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers did not agree with the assessments of Almond and Truscott. One black officer in the division described Fourth Term as "poorly planned by the Division Commander and staff. It was a simultaneous frontal attack by three regiments on a wide, well-defended front. There was no attempt to concentrate our strength at any point of suspected enemy weakness. There was practically no deception or surprise."²²¹ Many officers thought several points were ignored or improperly assessed during the planning and execution of the operations. One, the Germans had prepared this area with obstacles that combined with the terrain to prevent the Allies from advancing. Minefields, tank ditches, irrigation canals, creeks and drainage ditches covered the ground. Two, the avenues of approach to the 92nd's objectives were covered by the coastal guns emplaced in the mountains and at the La Spezia naval base north of Massa. Bomber attacks had failed to suppress these powerful coastal artillery pieces or any of the German artillery. Third, smoke laid to mask the advance the movement of the 92nd's units failed in that task.²²² Fourth, intelligence estimates failed to accurately estimate the effectiveness of German units, coastal guns and artillery. Fifth, the decision to direct the engineers not to clear minefields north of Cinque Canal until the attack had begun. The engineers, who conducted night-time clearing operations of the minefields south of the Canal prior to the attack, were forced to attempt to clear the minefields on the far side while under fire.²²³

Black soldiers also took exception to their commanders' use of the term "melting away" to imply that black soldiers had run from combat. Truscott pointed to the fact that a total of 750 stragglers were reported across the division during Operation Fourth Term to support his conclusion. Black officers pointed out that stragglers and the requirement for units to employ straggler lines were common among all the divisions in Europe. They pointed out how Truscott never addressed the fact that two of the four black regiments in the 92nd had no stragglers.²²⁴ Their main point of contention used the experience of the 36th Infantry Division at the Rapido River in Italy in January 1944 as a point of comparison. This division attempted to cross the Rapido River at points clearly visible to German troops occupying positions on Mount Cassino and fortified with minefields, machine guns, artillery and mortars. The 36th Infantry Division suffered 2,100 soldiers killed in action and more than 850 stragglers from two regiments.²²⁵ Lieutenant General Mark Clark wrote of these stragglers, who were originally listed as missing, "the missing comprised largely of the men who had become separated from their units and who later turned up for duty."²²⁶

Following the failure of Operation Fourth Term, Almond, Truscott, the 15th Army Group commanding general, Lieutenant General Mark Clark, and General Marshall, who was visiting the MTO at the time, devised a plan to reorganize the 92nd Infantry Division. The 92nd Infantry Division gained the white 473rd Infantry Regiment and the Japanese-American 442nd Infantry Regiment. The division retained the 370th Infantry Regiment and released the 366th Infantry Regiment from attachment to the 92nd. The 366th was then converted to service units.²²⁷ The 365th and 371st Infantry

Regiments were designated to move to the Serchio and Catigliana sectors under IV Corps control.²²⁸

On 5 April 1945, the reorganized 92nd Infantry Division launched Operation Second Wind. This operation, designed as a diversionary attack for Fifth Army, sought to force the Germans to commit its reserves to the area. The town of Massa was the 92nd Infantry Division's objective for this operation. The division's plan called for the 370th Infantry Regiment to seize the Strettoia Hills and then move north through the town of Montignoso into Massa. It also called for 442nd Infantry Regiment to seize Mount Altissimo to the northeast of Massa and then turn west, align on 370th's right flank and seize Mount Brugiana to the north of Massa. The 473rd Infantry Regiment, stationed in the Serchio Valley, was to conduct aggressive patrolling while providing one battalion to the division as a reserve. The 371st Infantry Regiment was designated to provide support by fire to the other regiments and eventually removed from the Division's command and control.²²⁹

On 5 April 1945, Operation Second Wind began with air attacks on enemy positions around Massa and on Punta Bianca. The 370th commenced its assault on three objectives in the Strettoia Hills, designated Hills X, Y, and Z. 1st Battalion assaulted Hills X and Y while 3rd Battalion assaulted Hill Z and 2nd Battalion served as the regimental reserve. 1st Battalion successfully seized Hill X and began to assault Hill Y when a German counterattack inflicted heavy casualties and drove the remainder of the battalion back to Hill X. 3rd Battalion took significant casualties from artillery prior to even advancing in its assault on Hill Z. 2nd Battalion, committed by the Regimental Headquarters, successfully occupied Hill Y and reinforced 1st Battalion on Hill X.²³⁰

On 6 April 1945, 2nd Battalion prepared to move from its positions on Hills X and Y to high ground overlooking the town of Montignoso. However, German intercepts of 370th's communications allowed the Germans to direct an artillery bombardment onto 2nd Battalion's positions as it was assembling for the attack. This bombardment completely disrupted the battalion. 1st Battalion prepared to attack from Hill X to a ridge to the north. However, enemy fire at the attack position that killed several leaders, including a company commander, completely disorganized the battalion.²³¹

After the delays on 5 and 6 April, Almond ordered the 473rd Infantry Regiment to move from the Serchio Valley and assume the 370th's mission while directing the 370th to withdraw to the Serchio Valley. On 8 April, 3rd Battalion, 370th Infantry Regiment continued to advance towards Montignoso and reported the apparent withdrawal of German forces from their defensive positions the night before.²³²

The 92nd Infantry Division continued the assault on Massa with 473rd Infantry Regiment pushing north from the Strettoia Hills with little opposition. The 442nd Infantry Regiment completed a daring encirclement of Massa through the mountains to the east. On 10 April, the 92nd entered Massa to the cheers and adulation of Italian partisans. The 92nd then moved north with the 442nd and 473rd Infantry Regiments and captured La Spezia Naval Base.²³³ During this time, the 370th Infantry Regiment moved north through the Serchio Valley, conducting patrols and probes of retreating German forces.²³⁴

First Lieutenant Vernon Baker was a 92nd Infantry Division soldier who challenged the beliefs that blacks were not brave, aggressive or capable of leading soldiers. A weapons platoon leader in Company C, 1st Battalion, 370th Infantry

Regiment, Baker distinguished himself during his battalion's attack on Hill X during Operation Second Wind. While reconnoitering for a position to set up his platoon's machine guns, Baker encountered a German observation post. He attacked and destroyed the observation post and a machine gun nest and four German soldiers hidden in an underground bunker. After his platoon, like much of his unit, was decimated by German machine gun fire and artillery, he led his platoon to a linkup point with the remainder of the company. After being directed to withdraw, Baker initially fought to maintain his position, but then led his platoon, with only three soldiers that had not been wounded, back to battalion lines. He led assaults to destroy two additional machine gun positions during this withdrawal. For his courage and actions, Baker received the Distinguished Service Cross (which like First Lieutenant John Fox, was upgraded in 1997 to the Medal of Honor).²³⁵

The 92nd Infantry Division embodied both sides of the debate about black soldiers serving in combat during World War II. Some senior Army officials pointed to the 92nd Infantry Division as proof that blacks could not perform as required on the front lines. Others pointed to it as an example of how racism and prejudice could doom black units before they hit the battlefield. The perspectives of two members of the division perhaps best illustrate the perspectives in the 92nd during its time in combat. The commander of the 365th Infantry Regiment, Colonel John D. Armstrong, provided the following assessment in February 1945 (following Operation Fourth Term): black soldiers conducted themselves well in combat. Ninety percent of officers and 80 percent of non-commissioned officers measured up well in combat. Yet, Colonel Armstrong stated that he did not see any potential in his or any black officers for advancement to the

field grade rank.²³⁶ Staff Sergeant David Cason, a member of the 92nd Infantry Division, when commenting on his experience:

I will say if the 92nd, in the same geographical position, had been told those were southern crackers up in those mountains, “get ‘em,” they would have, myself included, clawed their way up if necessary. We would have waded in our own blood up to our elbows to take them because we would have had a reason; an enemy we knew, despised, and would have enjoyed destroying. The German, what could he mean to us? Nobody bothered to make him our real enemy.²³⁷

Conclusion

Like their white counterparts, the performance of black combat units during combat in World War II was marked by successes and failures. Many black soldiers had eagerly awaited the opportunity to prove themselves on the battlefield and took advantage of their chance. Other black soldiers were not up to the rigors of combat and still other soldiers resented a society that had condemned them to second-class status. For those that questioned whether blacks possessed the courage, aggressiveness, intelligence and leadership required to succeed in combat, the unit and individual performances offered a resounding yes. Even those units considered failures, such as the 92nd Infantry Division, had long lists of black soldiers who died in combat for the United States. The question of whether these sacrifices would cut through the years of prejudice that tainted the view of some Army decision-makers remained unanswered at the conclusion of the war.

¹Richard Stewart, ed., *The United States Army in a Global Era, 1917-2003*, vol 2 of *American Military History* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2005), 141, 175-177.

²Guide to Federal Records, “Records of Mediterranean Theater of Operations,” National Archives, <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/492.html> (accessed 29 September 2010).

³Stewart, 141.

- ⁴Ibid., 143.
- ⁵Ibid., 143-144.
- ⁶Ibid., 144.
- ⁷Ibid., 148-149.
- ⁸Ibid., 150-152.
- ⁹Ibid., 152-153.
- ¹⁰Harry Yeide, *The Tank Killers* (Havertown, PA: CASEMATE, 2004), 199.
- ¹¹Stewart, 155.
- ¹²Ibid., 157-158.
- ¹³Yeide, 225.
- ¹⁴Stewart, 159-160.
- ¹⁵Ibid., 171, 174-175.
- ¹⁶Ibid., 177-179.
- ¹⁷Ibid., 179-182.
- ¹⁸Ibid., 182-185.
- ¹⁹Ibid., 186-189.
- ²⁰Ibid., 193.
- ²¹Booker, 145-146.
- ²²Ibid., 147.
- ²³Lee, 428-430.
- ²⁴Ibid., 445-447.
- ²⁵Ibid., 432.
- ²⁶Ibid., 448.

²⁷Minutes of Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policies, 26 April 1944, in *The Segregated Army*, vol. 5 of *Blacks in the Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 338.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 415.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 468-475.

³⁰“Congressional Record-House,” in *The Segregated Army*, vol. 5 of *Blacks in the Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 332.

³¹Memorandum from John McCloy to Henry Stimson, 2 March 1944, in *The Segregated Army*, vol. 5 of *Blacks in the Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 334.

³²Dalfiume, 95-97.

³³Dale E. Wilson, “Recipe for Failure: Major General Edward M. Almond and Preparation of the U.S. 92d Infantry Division for Combat in World War II,” *The Journal of Military History* 56, no. 3 (July 1992): 485.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 429-430.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 428.

³⁶Richard C. Anderson, US Army in World War II Artillery and AA Artillery, <http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/wwii/usarmy/artillery.aspx> (accessed 1 October 2010).

³⁷Converse, 148.

³⁸Christopher Moore, *Fighting for America* (New York: Presidio Press, 2005), 347.

³⁹Lee, 659-660.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 660.

⁴¹Booker, 128-130.

⁴²Converse, 148-149.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 184.

⁴⁴Converse, 150.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 150.

⁴⁶Booker, 128-130.

⁴⁷Converse, 148.

⁴⁸Ibid., 130.

⁴⁹Lee, 659.

⁵⁰Converse, 149.

⁵¹Anderson.

⁵²Lee, 644.

⁵³Anderson.

⁵⁴Lee, 645-646.

⁵⁵Ibid., 647-649.

⁵⁶Ibid., 654-655.

⁵⁷Ibid., 655-657.

⁵⁸Ibid., 652-653.

⁵⁹Ibid., 653-654.

⁶⁰Ibid., 657.

⁶¹Ibid., 644.

⁶²“Negro Artillery in World War II,” *The Field Artillery Journal* 36, no. 7 (April 1946): 228. http://sill-www.army.mil/famag/1946/apr_1946/APR_1946_PAGES_228_229.pdf (accessed 14 November 2010).

⁶³Lee, 651.

⁶⁴Ibid., 652.

⁶⁵Ibid., 655.

⁶⁶Ibid., 653.

⁶⁷Ibid., 655-656.

⁶⁸Ibid., 644.

⁶⁹Booker, 285.

⁷⁰Ibid., 286.

⁷¹Ibid., 290.

⁷²Joe Wilson, Jr., *784th Tank Battalion in World War II* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2007), 25-27.

⁷³Booker, 288.

⁷⁴Ibid., 286.

⁷⁵Charles C. Roberts, Jr., M5A1 Light Tank “Stuart” on <http://www.robertsarmory.com/m5.htm> (accessed 4 October 2010).

⁷⁶Joe Wilson, Jr., *784th Tank Battalion in World War II*, 154.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid., 155.

⁷⁹Ibid., 158.

⁸⁰Booker, 290-292.

⁸¹Ibid., 293.

⁸²Ibid., 295.

⁸³Ibid., 296.

⁸⁴Ibid., 297.

⁸⁵Ibid., 298.

⁸⁶Ibid., 301-302.

⁸⁷Ibid., 305.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid., 306-307.

⁹⁰Ibid., 308.

⁹¹Ibid., 309.

⁹²Ibid., 312.

- ⁹³Ibid., 310.
- ⁹⁴Ibid., 317-319.
- ⁹⁵Joe Wilson, Jr., *784th Tank Battalion in World War II*, 37.
- ⁹⁶Ibid., 43.
- ⁹⁷Ibid., 59-60
- ⁹⁸Ibid., 61.
- ⁹⁹Ibid., 62-64.
- ¹⁰⁰Booker, 310.
- ¹⁰¹Joe Wilson, Jr., *The 784th Tank Battalion in World War II*, 71-74.
- ¹⁰²Booker, 311.
- ¹⁰³Joe Wilson, Jr., *The 784th Tank Battalion in World War II*, 80-81.
- ¹⁰⁴Ibid., 86.
- ¹⁰⁵Ibid., 102-103.
- ¹⁰⁶Ibid., 119.
- ¹⁰⁷Ibid., 145.
- ¹⁰⁸Yeide, 4-7.
- ¹⁰⁹Ibid., 8.
- ¹¹⁰Booker, 131.
- ¹¹¹Yeide, 196.
- ¹¹²Booker, 131-132.
- ¹¹³Ibid., 132.
- ¹¹⁴Ibid., 133.
- ¹¹⁵Lee, 667.
- ¹¹⁶Yeide, 253-255.

- ¹¹⁷Lee, 668.
- ¹¹⁸Booker, 133.
- ¹¹⁹Ibid., 134-136.
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CHAPTER 4

EVOLUTION OF THE ARMY'S RACE POLICY FROM 1945 TO 1951

Overview

For the Army, the decade encompassing 1945 to 1954 was remarkable by any standard. This time period encompassed demobilization of the massive World War II force, performance of occupation duty in Europe and the Pacific, transformation of the national defense community, the onset of the Cold War and fighting the Korean War. The Army's race policy and practices underwent its own tumultuous evolution during this ten year period. The Army changed its policy towards black participation in the force from one of rigid segregation to complete integration, abandoning practices that had remained largely unchanged in the eighty years since the end of the Civil War. This change in the status and treatment of blacks in the Army was no less significant.

Following World War II, the Army faced the dilemma of determining black participation in the peacetime force. A return to the limited level of participation employed prior to World War II was politically unfeasible, yet the Army leadership felt that blacks presented a significant drop-off in capability and performance in comparison to white soldiers. From 1946 to 1950, the Army instituted policies designed to create greater cooperation between black and white soldiers; however, it remained committed to segregation, believing that the nation and therefore the Army, were generations away from black and white soldiers working, living and eating together. Starting in 1947, the Army faced increasing pressure to abandon the practice of segregation, yet it obstinately resisted, envisioning massive outbreaks of rebellion from white soldiers.

The Korean War and the Army's decision to suspend use of a quota in accessing blacks into the Army created a personnel imbalance that forced some commanders to integrate their units and created opportunities to act for other commanders who did not agree with the practice of segregation. A change in the civilian and uniformed leadership of the Army and the proven success of these informal integration efforts spurred the Army to begin to abandon segregation as an official personnel policy in 1951. By 1954, the Army had implemented integration at the soldier level across the entire force. When compared to the Army's previous history on race relations, this change was implemented at lightning speed. However, the relative speed of this change cannot mask the resistance from Army leadership throughout this process.

The Post-World War II Army

At the end of World War II, the United States Army faced the daunting task of demobilizing a force of nearly eight million soldiers and eighty-nine divisions.¹ In addition to demobilization, the Army faced the tasks of occupying Germany, Austria, Italy, Japan and southern Korea.² To further complicate matters, with the end of the war, the United States found itself increasingly in conflict with the ideology and policies of the Soviet Union.³ As the Soviet Union quickly moved to consolidate power across Eastern Europe, the United States was forced to take on the role of maintaining the balance of power in Europe.⁴

As the Army tried to determine the appropriate post-war force structure, other pressures quickly developed. Politicians, the public and soldiers stationed overseas demanded that demobilization proceed as quickly as possible. The Truman administration imposed strict budget restrictions on the Army as well. By 1947, reductions reduced the

Army to 684,000 soldiers using equipment that was poorly maintained due to losses of maintenance specialists across the force.⁵ At the time of the outbreak of the Korean War, the Army consisted of 591,000 soldiers manning ten combat divisions. Five of these divisions were stationed overseas in Japan and Europe while the other five remained in the United States. Budget constraints meant that all of these divisions suffered from shortages of personnel and equipment. Infantry regiments only received enough personnel to man two of their three battalions; artillery battalions could only man two of their three batteries. Every division lacked its full complement of weapons.⁶

The question of black participation in the post-war Army took on greater urgency in light of the limitations placed upon the force. Truman K. Gibson, the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of Defense, noted in a memorandum to Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy, a growing belief among Army leaders that the Army had not gained the most efficient use of black soldiers. This same memorandum also noted that political reality dictated that blacks would have a significant presence in the post-war Army.⁷ At the end of World War II, there were more than 650,000 black soldiers, two black divisions, four black separate infantry regiments and hundreds of battalion and company-sized units in every branch of the Army.⁸ The Army spent almost a year in determining what it could take away from its experiences with these soldiers during World War II and how it could apply that to the post-war force.

The Army's Lessons Learned about Black Soldiers in World War II

On 23 May 1945, as part of its post-war planning, the War Department directed its major commands to submit reports based upon the experiences of their subordinate commanders that provided considerations and recommendations for the employment of

blacks in the post-war military.⁹ The Army also appointed a board of senior officers under Lieutenant General Alvan Gillem to study the same topic and conducted an in-depth survey of the divisions in the European Theater of Operations that received black infantry platoons. In addition to these War Department efforts, field grade officers at the Command and General Staff College conducted several staff studies and forwarded them to the War Department for consideration.

Impact of the Black Infantry Replacements

Immediately following the end of the war with Germany, the Headquarters, European Theater of Operations conducted a survey of white commissioned and non-commissioned officers in seven of the divisions in which the black infantry platoons served. The purpose of the survey was to determine what they thought of “the combat performance of Negro rifle platoons, which were attached to their companies in March and April and fought side by side with white platoons through VE day.”¹⁰ The survey group encompassed 250 soldiers, consisting primarily of company grade officers and platoon sergeants that served with these platoons.

The results of this survey represented an indictment against those who claimed close contact between white and black soldiers would lead to racial conflict that could only be avoided through the use of segregation. Overall, the survey showed a dramatic improvement in the attitudes of these white soldiers towards serving in the same company as black soldiers. Sixty-four percent of the white officers and non-commissioned officers were initially opposed to serving in a unit with black and white platoons intermixed. However, after serving with the black infantry platoons, 77 percent of the white officers and non-commissioned officers reported that their feelings on

serving in a mixed unit had become more favorable. Remarkably, not one respondent stated that his experience serving with black soldiers made him less willing to serve in a mixed unit in the future.¹¹

The survey also demonstrated that white soldiers working in close proximity to black soldiers developed an increased appreciation of the capabilities and performance of black soldiers. More than 80 percent of those surveyed responded that black soldiers performed very well in combat while the remainder stated that black soldiers performed fairly well. No officers and only 1 percent of noncommissioned officers felt that blacks had not performed well in combat. In direct contradiction of the stereotypes of black soldiers prevalent in the Army, these company grade leaders often cited aggressiveness, use of fire and maneuver and teamwork as the strengths of the black infantry soldiers while identifying a tendency to take overly aggressive action as the main weakness. A significant majority (69 percent of officers and 83 percent of noncommissioned officers) felt that blacks would perform just as well as whites as infantrymen given the same training and experience. Seventeen percent of officers and 9 percent of noncommissioned officers felt that black soldiers made better infantrymen than white soldiers.¹² These responses stand in stark contrast to the stereotypes of black soldiers that described them as not capable of absorbing Army training and too scared to stand and fight.

The respondents to the survey also demonstrated an intuitive grasp at the group dynamics that impacted soldier morale and performance as well as the debilitating effect caused by the perceptions of discrimination that were inherent with the practice of segregation. Sixty-two percent of officers and 89 percent of noncommissioned officers felt that the most effective way of employing blacks as infantrymen in the future would

be to assign platoons of black infantrymen within white infantry companies. A very small minority (7 percent of officers and 1 percent of noncommissioned officers) advocated integration at the soldier level, while the remaining respondents felt that organizing black infantry at the company or battalion level was most effective. Those who advocated integrating black platoons into white companies provided justification that included: fostering positive competition, improving understanding between the two races, and eliminating any perception of discrimination on the part of the black soldiers.¹³

One more critical analytical point came from the work of this survey group. The survey group interviewed 1,710 white enlisted soldiers from across the European Theater's combat forces. The vast majority (1,450) of these soldiers served outside of the two armies that received the black infantry replacements while a small number (260) of the soldiers interviewed served in a division, regiment or company that received a black infantry platoon. The responses of these soldiers indicated that those who served in some proximity to the black infantry soldiers were much less opposed to serving in a company with both black and white platoons. Sixty-two percent of the soldiers that came from outside of the armies that received black infantrymen felt that they would dislike serving in such a company, while less than 25 percent of those soldiers that served in the same division or regiment as the black infantrymen expressed this sentiment. Two thirds of the soldiers interviewed that served in same company or regiment as the black infantrymen also felt it was a good idea to assign black and white infantry platoons to the same company while less than one-fifth of soldiers interviewed from units that did not have black infantrymen were in favor of such an idea.¹⁴

The results of this survey received mixed response from Army leaders. General George Marshall, Chief of Staff of the Army, and General Omar Bradley, commanding general of the armies that received the black infantry platoons felt that the performance of these soldiers represented the exception rather than the majority of black soldiers.¹⁵ General J. Lawton Collins, who became the deputy commanding general of Army Ground Forces the month after the release of the survey report, felt that although the black infantrymen represented a small portion of black soldiers and were better educated than the average black soldier, the results “augured well for the future.”¹⁶ These qualifiers demonstrated the degree to which stereotypes of black soldiers had taken root in the minds of senior Army officers. The European Theater survey report showed that the soldiers in black infantry platoons were not significantly more educated than the average black soldier in the ETO. Twenty-two percent of black infantrymen were high school graduates compared to 18 percent of colored soldiers in the ETO. Twenty-nine percent of black infantrymen were classified as higher than Class IV on the Army General Classification Test (AGCT) while only 17 percent of the total black soldiers in the ETO were classified above Class IV. In comparison, 71 percent of white infantrymen were classified above Class IV on the AGCT.¹⁷

All of the black infantrymen were volunteers, many of whom gave up leadership positions and noncommissioned officer rank in order to serve in the infantry. This was the one significant factor that did separate the black infantrymen from other black soldiers in the ETO, just as it separated members of black tank battalions from the average black soldier. This information gave credence to those that felt successful performance on the battlefield had much less to do with race and AGCT scores than

leadership, experience, training and soldier morale. The responses from the major commands of the War Department were much more ambiguous.

Major Command Proposals

The War Department's major commands, the Army Ground Forces (AGF), Army Service Forces (ASF), and the Army Air Forces (AAF) all submitted detailed responses that provided their assessments of the performance of black soldiers during World War II, the capabilities of black soldiers for service in the Army, causes of racial conflict, and recommendations for future employment of black soldiers. Analysis of the reports submitted by the AGF and ASF reveal the repetition of dated generalizations deploring the racial inferiority of blacks, a heavy reliance on the reports of the 92nd Infantry Division for evidence, and findings that ignored many of the accomplishments and actions of black soldiers during World War II. Most importantly, neither study discusses the effects of segregation much less the corrosive effects it had on morale. The Army Air Forces (AAF) report is not considered in this analysis. During World War II, the AAF achieved virtual autonomy, with its commander, General Hap Arnold, serving as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹⁸ The AAF further demonstrated its autonomy by publishing doctrine without consultation or review by the War Department General Staff. By early 1946, General Arnold laid the groundwork for the establishment of an independent Air Force.¹⁹

The major commands' assessment of the performance of black soldiers during World War II was overwhelmingly negative. The Army Service Forces stated that blacks performed at 60 to 75 percent of what white soldiers were capable of and rated the overall efficiency and leadership ability of black soldiers well below that of white soldiers.²⁰ The

Army Ground Forces added that black soldiers did not display any sense of responsibility, showed a tendency to excessive malingering, and were undependable. Black officers also suffered from a lack of any sense of responsibility, initiative, and self-confidence. Black noncommissioned officers lacked initiative and force due to a natural deficit of leadership ability. The AGF report did acknowledge that blacks performed well in units that did not require technical ability.²¹

The assessment of the capabilities of black soldiers was equally grim. Both the AGF and ASF reports highlighted black soldiers' lack of education, mechanical, and technical skills. Though physically qualified for combat, the lack of education and technical ability resulted in only a small percentage of the black population possessing the mental characteristics necessary for combat soldiers.²² The ASF felt that blacks' shortfalls in education and experience limited black soldiers to unskilled or low-skilled military occupational specialties.²³ The AGF went further, stating that blacks' low capability is demonstrated in civilian life. "The Negro does not perform his share of civil duties in time of peace in proportion to his population. He has relatively few leaders in industrial or commercial life. He takes but a very small part in government. Compared to the white man, he is admittedly of inferior mentality. He is inherently weaker in character."²⁴ Of course this statement ignored the fact that discrimination often relegated blacks to service jobs, the concerted efforts in Southern states to prevent blacks from voting since the 1870s, and the increased role in politics by black leaders during the 1930s and 1940s.

The AGF report complained that black soldiers focused more on the issue of racial equality than service to the nation.²⁵ It identified Army policies for handling black

soldiers as the primary cause for racial conflict. The policies it questioned were: Military Police actions in dealing with black soldiers, placing blacks from the North on Southern posts with Jim Crow laws that they were not familiar with, and a lack of recreational facilities for blacks. The AGF also blamed the black press for inflaming the racial sensitivities of black soldiers.²⁶ The ASF identified the causes of racial conflict as: prejudices, criminal elements among black soldiers, inexperienced unit leaders that were unable to resolve soldier complaints, and low morale due to lack of transportation to and from off-post areas, lack of recreational facilities, and lack of promotion opportunities.²⁷ While both reports listed all of the symptoms of the problem, neither identified segregation as the cause. While the Army did not control the integration of civilian facilities and services, the practice of segregation on post provided black soldiers with constant reminders of their second-class status and offered no respite from the frustration caused by segregation in the South.

Finally, both reports made suggestions for how to best train and employ black soldiers in the future. The AGF report repeated General Marshall's mantra that attempting social reform in the Army before it was enacted in the civilian world would endanger the Army's ability to expand the force quickly if needed for another national crisis. However, it did propose a compromise in which the Army would attach black units to white units for training and operations.²⁸ Both recommended limiting the use of blacks to small units, particularly at the battalion level. The AGF reported that battalion-sized units were the most acceptable to theater commanders.²⁹ The AGF advocated for establishing equal standards for white and black soldiers and providing black soldiers the opportunity to demonstrate their competency for combat duty. The AGF report also

advocated assignment of black soldiers to duties commensurate with their potential and capabilities.³⁰ In order to improve the capabilities of blacks, the ASF recommended execution of literacy training for those soldiers rated as Class V on the AGCT.³¹

Prior to the submission of these reports by the major commands, Truman Gibson pointed out the need for the commands to focus on analyzing the practice of segregation and to set aside post-World War I beliefs about black soldiers.³² The assessments of the major commands fell well short in that regard. Not only did the Army Ground Forces and Army Service Forces fail to address segregation, they invested much of their arguments in repeating the same stereotypes of black inferiority that were so prevalent prior to World War II. The Gillem Board would provide the War Department with an assessment that came much closer to a contemporary examination of the utilization of blacks in the Army.

The Gillem Board

On 4 October 1945, the War Department appointed Lieutenant General Alvan Gillem, Jr., Major General Lewis Pick, and Brigadier Generals Winslow Morse and Alan Warnock to “prepare a broad policy for the utilization of Negro manpower in the military establishment.”³³ This group, commonly referred to as the Gillem Board, identified several questions that it would have to answer in order to accomplish this task. Two key questions it formulated were: “1. How shall Negro personnel be utilized in the Army in the event of another national emergency? 2. What basis of Negro personnel is necessary in the post-war Army in order to provide for rapid expansion in time of war?”³⁴

The Gillem Board provided a set of lessons learned from World War II that for the first time went deeper than reviewing reports from field commanders. While this

assessment did not always lead to different conclusions, it attempted to use more than perceptions of past performance as predictors for future potential. One of the conclusions drawn by the Gillem Board from its study of World War II was that the nation would have limited manpower of varying quality to offer the Army in the event of another major war. It was incumbent upon the Army to place soldiers in positions to which they were best suited. In the words of the Board, “the Negro . . . should be given every opportunity and aid to prepare himself for effective military service in company with every other citizen who is called.”³⁵

The Gillem Board’s examination of World War II also led it the conclusion that blacks demonstrated a lack of leadership qualities. Instead of affixing this deficit to inherent characteristics of the race, the Board cited environment and lack of opportunities as the cause.³⁶ While this conclusion still relied heavily on the self-serving statements of senior commanders who blamed black junior officers and noncommissioned officers for all failings of black units and ignored the performance of multiple units outside of the two infantry divisions, it did represent a change in thought process in American on race relations.

In 1944, Swedish economist and sociologist Gunnar Myrdal published *An America Dilemma*, the results of a four year study that he conducted of race relations in the United States. Myrdal argued that discrimination and segregation led to blacks receiving less educational, job training, employment and housing opportunities. The lower social, economic and political achievements enjoyed by blacks in general was a direct result of the effects of segregation and not due to racial inferiority. Myrdal theorized that the dilemma resulting from the nation’s belief in justice and equality but

failure to accord those to blacks negatively impacted the United States politically and economically.³⁷ *An American Dilemma* earned wide praise in the United States, inspiring those looking to reform.³⁸ It also provided a new perspective for military officers, demonstrated by its presence in the bibliographies of several military studies written on the utilization of blacks in post-World War II Army.

Utilizing the lessons of Myrdal, the Gillem Board conducted an analysis of the demographics of black America and reached the conclusion that a combination of improved financial well-being for blacks and spreading acceptance of blacks as equals in the Northern and Western United States portended well for the future. These improvements would lead to increased education opportunities as well as opportunities for more blacks to learn technical skills through civilian employment that the Army found lacking in black soldiers during World War II.³⁹ The demographic changes noted by the Gillem Board were a shift in blacks from the southern to the northern United States and the fact that only 30 percent of blacks from the South had any education above the grade school level, while 60 percent of Blacks from the rest of the US had progressed to high school or beyond. The Board also noted that blacks made significant improvements in employment during World War II. In 1938, blacks made up 8 percent of the federal government workforce and 90 percent of those federal workers performed custodial jobs. By 1944, blacks increased to 19 percent of the federal work force with only 40 percent of those employed in custodial jobs. Between 1942 and 1944, blacks increased from 3 percent to 8 percent of workers in the defense industry.⁴⁰

Based upon this analysis, the Gillem Board concluded that the War Department should establish a progressive and flexible policy based upon the assumption of

“continued mental and physical improvement of all citizens . . . they should be implemented promptly. They must be objective by nature. They must eliminate, at the earliest practicable moment, any special consideration based upon race.”⁴¹ Similar to previous studies, the Gillem Board found that black combat units required to close with the enemy were the least effective, due primarily to the poor leadership provided by black company-grade officers and black non-commissioned officers. The Gillem Board concluded that the post-war Army must focus on the development of leadership in black soldiers.⁴²

The Gillem Board recommended the establishment of an initial and ultimate objective for the Army on the issue of segregation. The initial objective was “the utilization of the proportionate ratio of the manpower available to the military establishment during the postwar period.”⁴³ The ultimate objective was “the effective use of all manpower made available to the military establishment in the event of a major mobilization at some unknown date against an undetermined aggressor. The manpower to be utilized, in the event of another major war, in the Army without regard to antecedents or race.”⁴⁴ The board recommended a series of actions designed to move the Army closer to the initial objective. The Gillem Board concluded that the Army would have to establish enough black units to provide trained cadres and leaders in the event that the nation went through another mobilization. In addition, the Gillem Board also recommended providing all officers, black and white, with equal opportunities for promotion and professional development; assigning blacks with specialized skill sets to overhead units as individuals; continuation of the policy of establishing composite

organizations consisting of black and white units; and use of education and experience to resolve friction points that would occur in these composite units.⁴⁵

The Gillem Board report elicited comment from across the War Department. These comments showed the disparity of feeling on the issue of how to incorporate blacks into the Army of the future. The progressive elements in the War Department took exception with the Gillem Board's avoidance of any discussion of segregation. The more traditional elements in the Army clearly did not agree with the Gillem Board's embrace of Myrdal's sociological theory.

The traditionalist view in the Army was voiced by the major commands and the General Staff Operations Division. Major General Idwal H. Edwards, G3 of the General Staff, stated that any efforts to make a broader use of blacks across all career fields in the post-war Army must recognize "the inaptitude and limited capacity of the Negro soldier."⁴⁶ Edwards' response also urged the establishment of a single standard of professional proficiency for both black and white officers, repeating a common World War I and II belief that black officers enjoyed relaxed commissioning standards due to officer quotas. This belief ignored the fact that in World War II, black officers attended integrated Officer Candidate Schools.⁴⁷ The Operations Division's final recommendation was to ensure that no black officer commanded white troops.⁴⁸ These last two recommendations were contradictory. If a black officer, held to the same standards as white officers, met the prerequisite qualification for command, on what basis would the Army deny that officer a command? It is hard to imagine that this recommendation was motivated by anything other than adherence to the racist belief that blacks should never be placed in charge of white soldiers.

The Army Ground Forces response to the Gillem Board report reiterated the conclusions that it submitted in its earlier report to the War Department and again voiced the opinion that any utilization of black soldiers should start with a comprehensive national policy on the utilization of blacks in every service of the armed forces.⁴⁹ This recommendation would soon become ironic as the Air Force and Navy instituted policies to integrate their forces several years earlier than the Army. The Army Service Forces' response to the Gillem Board report expressed the belief that composite units of black and white units should be limited to the group, regiment or brigade levels. The rationale for this was forcing white soldiers to intermingle with black soldiers would negatively impact the white soldiers' morale and place the Army in the unwanted position of attempting to lead social reform.⁵⁰ Many senior leaders in the Army continued to hold to the belief that any attempt at integration would fall into the arena of social reform and would negatively impact the Army's readiness. However, the black infantry platoons from World War II, and several other instances of integration in training, provided some evidence that soldiers quickly adapted to integration based on military necessity.

The progressive critique of the Gillem Board report came from two departing members of the War Department, Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy and Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War Truman Gibson. McCloy described the Gillem Board report as an objective and constructive study that represented a great advance over previous studies. He made only two criticisms of the report. His first criticism was of the vagueness of the wording in the report because of its avoidance of any mention of segregation. McCloy felt that if the War Department did not clearly establish its intent towards the practice of segregation, it would lead to misinterpretation and uneven

enforcement of any policies resulting from the Gillem Board's report.⁵¹ McCloy's second criticism of the report was its recommendation that the War Department maintain a quota on the black population in the Army. McCloy did not "see any place for a quota in a policy that looks to utilization of Negroes on the basis of ability . . . [this] is inconsistent with the basic premise of the report, that we should make the most efficient use of available manpower."⁵²

Truman K. Gibson had spent the last five years working in the War Department, dealing with an Army whose leaders he considered inertial and resistant to change.⁵³ His main criticism of the report mirrored McCloy's in that he felt the Gillem Board report lacked an "unequivocal statement on the issue of segregation . . . the statements and recommendations are ambiguous and susceptible to misinterpretation."⁵⁴ The fact that he interpreted the Board's report as a repudiation of segregation may have made this perceived lack of clarity even more objectionable in Gibson's eyes. In a letter to Secretary of War Robert Patterson, Gibson expressed his assessment that the Gillem Board did not intend for segregation to limit the utilization of black officers in the post-war Army. He also pointed to the Board's references to composite units as evidence that the Gillem Board opposed the continued use of segregation.⁵⁵ Gibson felt that the Gillem Board report described a process of gradual movement away from segregation to integration by focusing on the best use of individual officers and soldiers. He also praised the Gillem Board for recognizing the often repeated argument that the Army must avoid getting ahead of the nation in social reform as an excuse for not taking action.⁵⁶ Based on his assessment of the Board's intent, Gibson urged the acceptance of the Gillem Board report and publication of a policy by the War Department that: (1) clearly stated that

commanders were no longer bound by Army policies requiring segregation; (2) established the end of segregation as the eventual goal; and (3) clearly outlined any intermediate steps implemented in order to prevent confusion.⁵⁷

After considering all responses, the Gillem Board held firm in walking a fine line between avoiding any controversial recommendations while introducing progressive thoughts on race relations into the highest echelons of the Army. The real significance of the Gillem Board report comes from the fact that while it essentially drew upon the same stereotypes to categorize the performance of blacks in combat as substandard, it attributed the cause of this performance to things that could be addressed instead of racial characteristics.

Command and General Staff College Studies

In the years following the release of the Gillem Board report, several field grade officers attending the Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, also weighed in on the subject of blacks in the post-war force. Following the end of World War II, the Command and General Staff College conducted two iterations of an experimental education program called the Command Course. This course targeted a small group of carefully selected senior lieutenant colonels and colonels to study staff operations, regional studies, theater planning, and conduct analysis of recent combat operations and current and future problems for the War Department. The leadership of the Command and General Staff College targeted officers that they believed would rise to the general officer ranks.⁵⁸ The second iteration of the command course conducted two analytical studies of the utilization of black soldiers. Examination of these studies

provides insight into the opinions of those staff officers and mid-level commanders who often developed the positions espoused by senior commanders.

Colonel Stephen Mack, who served as a fighter group commander in Europe during World War II, authored one of the studies while the other study was authored by a student committee consisting of three colonels and three lieutenant colonels, led by Lieutenant Colonel F. C. Cook, an infantry officer. While the conclusions drawn in both of these studies mirror many of the conclusions expressed in the previously mentioned studies, both studies also show a willingness to place responsibility for resolving this situation on the Army.

Colonel Mack's analysis did not break new ground in concluding that black soldiers did not perform as well as white soldiers during World War II, black soldiers performed best in service units, and segregated black units performed worse than black units that were integrated into larger white units. Mack did show a willingness to address segregation as well as knowledge of the latest sociological theory, stating that repression and environment rather than lack of inherent ability led to the poor performance of black soldiers.⁵⁹ Mack reached several conclusions and recommendations that were not voiced by many other elements within the War Department. He recommended integration of black and white soldiers at the lowest level, preferably at the individual soldier level.⁶⁰ He theorized that closer associations between black and white soldiers would improve the performance of blacks as they attempted to imitate the actions of whites.⁶¹ He also recommended maintaining separate barracks, social and recreational areas for black and white soldiers, due to public desire for segregation.⁶² Colonel Mack concluded that white

officers must change their thinking towards black soldiers and take responsibility for the development of black soldiers.⁶³

Lieutenant Colonel Cook's study reached similar conclusions about the performance of blacks during World War II and the presence of segregation in American society. The Cook committee did not advocate integration at the individual level, however. It recommended continued formation of composite units at the company level and maintaining black regiments in order for senior black officers to gain the experience of leading large units.⁶⁴ This study also recommended retention of the 10 percent limit on black strength in the Army and use of segregated units in training due to the fact that training was most effective when personnel of similar intelligence were grouped together.⁶⁵ Of course, this justification seemed to point towards assigning soldiers to training organizations based on AGCT rating rather than race. The bibliographies of both studies list Gunnar Myrdal's *An America Dilemma*, the Gillem Board report, and the 92nd Infantry Division Summary of Operations as sources. These sources explain both the progressive attitudes and the overwhelmingly negative assessments of the performance of blacks during World War II contained in both studies.

The Army dedicated a considerable amount of time and attention to studying the performance and potential of black soldiers. All parties seemed to accept that blacks would make up a far greater portion of the peacetime force than at any other time in the Army history. Each study pointed out the belief that blacks did not perform well in a combat role and fell especially short in the area of battlefield leadership. These findings seemed to rely overwhelmingly on the biased reports submitted by the 92nd Infantry Division (and to a much lesser degree the 93rd Infantry Division) at the expense of

recognizing the performance of black separate battalions (armor, anti-tank, etc). This period of analysis also saw different viewpoints on the roots of the poor performance by blacks and the extent that the Army should relax its policies strictly segregating the force. Unfortunately, Army leaders were not willing to closely examine segregation itself. Whether through genuine ignorance or turning a blind eye, the multitude of surveys and reports failed to mention the corrosive effects that segregation had on the morale and performance of black soldiers. In April 1946, the Army decided upon a course of action and published War Department Circular 124.

What the Army Did: Post-War Race Policy and Actions

In 1946, three months after the Gillem Board issued its finalized report, the War Department published Circular 124, outlining its policy for the utilization of blacks in the post-war Army. This circular listed thirteen implementing steps; over the next four years, the Army would make very little real progress in implementing these steps. The actions that the Army did enact centered on education, personnel balancing and establishing some composite units. Though the Army was set on maintaining a gradual transition from segregation to integration based on changes in social conditions in the nation, the failure to establish intermediate objectives allowed the Army's efforts to essentially stall after the issuance of Circular 124.

War Department Circular 124

On 27 April 1946, the War Department issued Circular 124, "Utilization of Negro Manpower in the Postwar Army Policy." This document defined the War Department's policy as:

Negro manpower in the postwar Army will be utilized on a broader professional scale than has obtained heretofore. The development of leaders and specialists based on individual merit and ability, to meet effectively the requirement of an expanded war Army will be accomplished through the medium of installations and organizations. Groupings of Negro units with white units in composite organizations will be accepted policy.⁶⁶

Circular 124 listed thirteen implementing steps. The most critical of these steps included: establish a desired quota for blacks in the Army equivalent to 10 percent of the force; organize black units throughout the combat and service branches; organize black units at company, battalion, regiment or group level; prohibition of discrimination in recreational areas; station black units in locations where attitudes are favorable and limit the number of black units assigned to one station to avoid overburdening local communities. Other implementing steps listed in Circular 124 include: replacing white officers in black units with qualified black officers; continue with integrated OCS; assign blacks with special skills or qualifications to an overhead or installation mission as individuals (these units were all white at the time) and finally, it placed the onus for educating the force about this policy on commanders.⁶⁷

By avoiding establishing intermediate objectives or implementing timelines, the War Department essentially left it to individual commanders to implement change as they saw fit. While a few commanders did take positive steps to implement some of the things called for in the memo, most were content with the status quo and did not press for change.

Implementation

The three areas that the Army took steps in to implement the measures outlined in Circular 124 were education, personnel balancing and forming composite units. Of these three areas, education received the most effort by far. Education took on two forms:

indoctrination of the force and improving the education level of black soldiers.

Indoctrination of the force focused on using films and unit-based discussions to promote understanding and support for the new policy. The War Department developed four films, *The Negro Soldier*, *Teamwork*, *Don't be a Sucker* and *How Do We Look to Others* to help educate and indoctrinate soldiers.⁶⁸

The War Department also produced material for use in unit discussions between company-level leaders and their soldiers. The most prominent of these documents was *Army Talk*. In April 1947, the Army published *Army Talk 170* focused specifically on Circular 124. This edition of *Army Talk* focused on blacks in the Army, black infantry replacements during World War II and minorities. This was part of the Troop Information Program, designed to bring information to soldiers and improve their understanding through discussion.⁶⁹ *Army Talk 170* provided an in-depth discussion of the Circular 124 and the Gillem Board report and denied that the Army had an role in social reform or changing civilian race practices.⁷⁰ It described the Army's position on race was essentially that "basic equality of opportunity of all soldiers, irrespective of race, is essential to highest military effectiveness."⁷¹ This discussion program also defined the real impact of this policy to soldiers as: more blacks in the Army than in the last peacetime Army; blacks were eligible to work in more career fields; black and white soldiers would associate more frequently due to composite units.⁷² By discussing the black infantry replacements from World War II, the Army intended to show soldiers that composite units had succeeded in the past and many of the black and white soldiers involved enjoyed the experience.⁷³ The final topic of *Army Talk 170* was a discussion about minorities that defined cooperation as an important component of an effective

Army force. In this context, it defined cooperation as “I’m willing to work with you if you’ve got the stuff.”⁷⁴ The discussion notes instructed commanders to stress the fact that the Army was not telling soldiers what to believe, but instead was interested in regulating their behavior. The notes also pointed out the unique nature of military life in that soldiers did not have the luxury of choosing their leaders, subordinates or co-workers.⁷⁵

There were several initiatives in the Army to improve the educational level of black soldiers. One effort occurred in 1946 at Fort Benning with the establishment of an on-duty educational program targeting members of the 25th Infantry Regiment who had less than an eighth grade education. This program halted before completion due to a shortage of instructors.⁷⁶ The European Command established a more comprehensive program in 1947. Lieutenant General Clarence Huebner of European Command Headquarters, took personal interest in the establishment of training programs for black soldiers, expressing the opinion that black soldiers could improve their performance by undergoing “a system of rigid basic training with carefully controlled conditions which insure, insofar as possible, the development of pride in self and organization.”⁷⁷

The European Command education program began with a basic course for white and black officers newly arrived in Europe. Both groups performed very similarly in this integrated training.⁷⁸ As European Command prepared to activate two black battalions to serve in the Constabulary, Huebner directed the incorporation of on-duty education into the thirteen week training program designed to retrain service troops into infantry and Constabulary. Huebner believed that this education program was a key part of producing well-disciplined soldiers and fostering leadership, self-confidence and esprit de corps in these units.⁷⁹ The training program consisted of two hours of daily education and six

hours of daily military training. The education program focused on achieving the equivalent of a high school education; those who had completed high school were able to sign up for correspondence courses.⁸⁰ This program was repeated in August 1947 for three newly formed black infantry companies. Of the 855 soldiers in these three companies, ninety-five were illiterate, 513 were literate but had only grade school education while 247 had attended high school.⁸¹

The education program earned praise as the infantry battalions were described as “set[ting] the standard for appearance, conduct and duty performance for black units in EUCOM.”⁸² Colonel Maurice Bigelow, commander 26th Infantry Regiment, provided oversight to the training of the three new rifle companies and felt that “the remarkable way in which the troops have improved during the twelve weeks’ training has been due in a large degree to the educational program.”⁸³ Ironically, the success of this program did cause some friction among soldiers. On-duty education programs were only available to white soldiers who had less than a fifth grade education. White soldiers resented the on-duty education programs available to black soldiers. Ironically, some black soldiers were upset by the program as they felt discriminated against because they were required to meet a higher standard than whites to stop participating in the on-duty education.⁸⁴ These complaints reflected the mounting difficulties caused by segregation.

The final implementing actions performed by the Army during this time period were establishing some composite units and rebalancing personnel. In the two years that followed the issuance of Circular 124, the Army formed four composite units. The first was the 24th Infantry Regiment, which was assigned as one of the three regiments of the white 25th Infantry Division in Japan in February 1947.⁸⁵ In December 1947, the black

555th Parachute Infantry Battalion was redesignated as 3rd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Battalion and assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division along with the 503rd Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion and the 758th Tank Battalion.⁸⁶ In January 1948, a black infantry battalion was assigned to the 9th Infantry Regiment of the 2nd Infantry Division. Finally, in March 1948, the 508th Armored Field Artillery Battalion joined the 2nd Armored Division.⁸⁷

The two personnel issues that the Army focused on during the implementation of the War Department's new policy on utilizing black soldiers were enlisted personnel strength and officer accessions. In July 1946, blacks made up more than 16 percent of the enlisted strength of the post-war Army, well above the target of 10 percent. Much of this was caused by the reenlistment of professional privates, a term used to refer to soldiers who were not capable of advancing in rank but remained in the service. The Army addressed this issue by raising the minimum AGCT score required for admittance to the Army by twenty-nine points (but only for black soldiers) and restricting reenlistment to authorized specialties. This policy remained in effect for over a year.⁸⁸ The Army focused on officer accessions by increasing black participation in the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). By 1948, the Army established ROTC programs at twelve black colleges and universities. Seven of these programs were designed to access infantry officers, three were designated as artillery and only two for the services (one Quartermaster and one Transportation Corps).⁸⁹

The Army's actions from 1946 to 1949 seem to bear out Truman Gibson's fear that the inertia of the Army was extremely resistant to change. Without directed actions and deadlines, it was left to the Army's senior commanders and staff to determine which

steps to take and how to take them. Not surprisingly, most of the effort expended was in education, an action that carried low-risk for backlash among soldiers. The War Department viewed the transition to an integrated force as a very gradual process, so to the senior leadership, the steps taken over this period of time fit their model perfectly. What became increasingly apparent was that elements outside of the War Department had a much different view of the speed with which this process needed to occur.

Outside Pressure for Integration in the Army

Political pressure on the Army to abandon segregation in its utilization of black soldiers had continued throughout World War II. While confined primarily to black activists during the war, this pressure began to come from other sources in the post-war period. Federal and state political figures, and the federal government joined in with black activists unsatisfied with the slow pace of reform in the Army. This pressure culminated in July 1948, when President Truman issued Executive Order 9981, which directed equal opportunity and treatment for all people in the armed forces. He quickly acknowledged that the purpose of issuing Executive Order 9981 was to end segregation in the military.

President's Commission on Civil Rights

On December 5, 1946, President Truman issued Executive Order 9808, establishing the President's Commission on Civil Rights to "determine whether and in what respect current law-enforcement measures and the authority and means possessed by Federal, State, and local governments may be strengthened and improved to safeguard the civil rights of the people."⁹⁰ Truman felt that "the federal government was hampered . . . by inadequate civil-rights statutes and that the Department of Justice lacked the tools

to enforce [existing] statutes”⁹¹ In October 1947, the Commission on Civil Rights presented its final report to President Truman, titled *To Secure These Rights*. In this comprehensive look at the state of civil rights in America, the Army would take a prominent place as an area that needed immediate improvement.

The Commission’s report described prejudice as undemocratic, particularly in the Armed Forces where men are asked to risk their lives. Soldiers surrender some of their rights as citizens when they agree to serve. In return, the government is obligated to protect the integrity of each soldier and maintain the honor of the profession of arms.⁹² In these short sentences, the Commission captured the essence of what the Army could not or would not understand. The sacrifice of military service for blacks was intertwined with the desire for recognition of their entitlement to the rights for which they were fighting. Segregation served to remind them that the Army expected them to sacrifice without feeling a need to protect their integrity.

The Commission felt that the military had many areas that required further action, describing discrimination as a major element that is preventing the services from reaching their own objectives on equality. The Commission stated that the services employed practices that fostered unequal treatment. The Army’s 10 percent quota earned specific mention.⁹³ The Commission identified both internal and external impacts of the armed services’ practice of segregation, advancing a theory that segregation and the restriction of blacks to certain career fields served as a self-fulfilling prophecy.⁹⁴ Soldiers that observed blacks only performing certain jobs in the military came to believe that these were the only jobs that blacks were capable of performing. Externally, the civil rights record of the nation and the military negatively impacted foreign policy.⁹⁵

The Commission envisioned a role for the Armed Forces in ending segregation that represented the Army's worst nightmare. The Commission felt that the military services could be used to "educate citizens on a broad range of political and social problems . . . we may prove that the majority and minorities of our population can train and work and fight side by side in cooperation and harmony."⁹⁶ In addition, the Commission advocated preemptive action by the federal government rather than waiting for local governments to act. The Commission challenged those who felt that the way to proceed was to focus on education and wait for individual and local government action to end discrimination. The Commission's report coupled government action to eliminate manifestations of prejudice with education and voluntary efforts to eliminate prejudice.⁹⁷ These ideas were direct contradictions to the Army's belief that it could not lead social reform and must instead eliminate segregation only after the civilian populace had eliminated it.

In its final report, the President's Commission on Civil Rights recommended "the enactment of legislation followed by administrative action to immediately end all discrimination and segregation in all branches of the Armed Services."⁹⁸ This recommendation was one of several intended to strengthen the right to citizenship and its privileges. While the Army's view of segregation was that it was simply the social order of the times and it was not the Army's place to challenge or change that, the Commission viewed segregation as "an obstacle to establishing harmonious relationships among groups. Where artificial barriers between groups are broken, tension and conflict begin to be replaced by cooperative effort."⁹⁹ The Commission's report indicated that not everyone agreed with the Army's gradual, unmeasured approach to integration.

Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training

In October 1945, President Truman proposed the implementation of universal military training in post-war America. Universal military training as he envisioned it, would require all men between eighteen and twenty years of age to undergo a year of military training. While these men would remain civilians and not actually be inducted into the armed services during this time, they would provide a trained force in the event that the nation required a rapid expansion of the size of the standing military. Truman believed that universal military training was the method of ensuring that the United States did not enter into its next war with a military composed largely of conscripted personnel rushed through training. Over the next eighteen months, Congress worked on several bills regarding universal military training.¹⁰⁰

In 1947, a universal military training bill in Congress received national attention. Civil rights proponents, frustrated by the lack of progress in ending segregation in the Armed Forces, examined this proposal closely. The fact that the proposed bill for universal military training had no language addressing segregation combined with an ongoing national discussion of the reinstitution of Selective Service provided activists with a rallying issue. A. Phillip Randolph co-founded the Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training to organize resistance to these measures.¹⁰¹

President Truman established the President's Advisory Commission on Universal Training and appointed Truman K. Gibson as one of its members. As the Soviet Union's influence spread across eastern Europe, universal military training gained support and interest as a measure necessary to develop military readiness as part of an effective response.¹⁰² During meetings of the Advisory Commission, Gibson "argued strenuously

against segregation, laying out chapter and verse on its deleterious effect on military efficiency and its injustice to black men who wanted nothing more than the chance to serve and defend their country.”¹⁰³ In May 1947, the Commission issued its final report, which rejected segregation and identified race prejudice as an enemy of America.¹⁰⁴

In 1948, the Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service expanded and became the League for Nonviolent Civil Disobedience Against Military Segregation and gained following as Randolph traveled the country speaking to young blacks.¹⁰⁵ By March 1948, Randolph’s organization had gained enough momentum to warrant his inclusion in a group of black activists invited to the White House to meet with President Truman. Randolph told Truman that many blacks would refuse to fight if drafted unless all forms of discrimination were abolished from the military. He then called for the President to issue an executive order ending segregation in the Armed Forces.¹⁰⁶ Later that month, Randolph appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee and stated that he intended to encourage blacks to resist a draft and would encourage white activists and sympathizers to do the same. Several Senators stated their opinion that this constituted treason if conducted during time of war, but Randolph held his ground.¹⁰⁷

Following his Senate appearance, Randolph began to hold public rallies in New York City, advocating resistance to induction in a segregated military. Randolph’s action created a split amongst black activists and prominent organizations quickly denounced his statements to the Senate Armed Services Committee. This included the Urban League, NAACP and the *Pittsburgh Courier*. These leaders stated that blacks would always be citizens first and would defend the nation during time of war.¹⁰⁸

Randolph did have many supporters, perhaps none more prominent than Congressman Adam Clayton Powell of New York. Powell told the House Armed Services Committee that Randolph's statements accurately captured the feelings of many blacks.¹⁰⁹ Opinion polls reflected overwhelming (70 percent) support for Randolph's stance by black men. In August 1948, Randolph called for an end to the civil disobedience campaign when President Truman confirmed that his intent in issuing Executive Order 9981 was to end segregation in the military. Though many of his supporters felt that he had fallen victim to vague, empty promises rather than action, the movement was unable to sustain itself without the celebrity that Randolph brought to its fundraising and publicity efforts.¹¹⁰ While the Army stayed on the sidelines of the debate over universal military training, there was no doubt that the military establishment paid attention to the progress of these issues closely related to national defense. The continued success of civil rights activists in using defense-related legislation to generate support for desegregation of the Armed Forces should have caused the Army leadership to pause and reexamine its positions. Another indicator of shifts in public opinion came in the form of several states that came forward and requested authorization to completely integrate their National Guard units.

Requests for Integration of the National Guard

In late 1947 and early 1948, the Army's race policy came under fire from several state governors. Governors of several Northern and Western states requested authorization to integrate their National Guard forces. Federal laws required these governors to comply with federal policies or gain federal approval to deviate.¹¹¹ While the Army was able to fight off these challenges to its policy, it required abandoning its

previous stance that the civilian community would dictate when segregation was no longer necessary for instituting blanket policy across the force.

After the release of War Department Circular 124, the Army Director for Personnel and Administration recommended that the Committee on National Guard Policy amend its regulations for utilization of black soldiers in the National Guard to match the new policy for the active Army. The Committee on National Guard Policy proposed that individual states set their own policy, a course of action which the Army opposed.¹¹² In May 1947, the Committee on National Guard Policy established a policy by which National Guard units would not institute integration at the company level or lower. Any unit not in compliance with this would lose federal recognition.¹¹³

In January 1948, the Governor of New Jersey requested authorization from Secretary of the Army Kenneth Royall to integrate the New Jersey Army National Guard due to a recently enacted provision in the state constitution that prohibited segregation in the militia. Royall's response was that Army policy as promulgated in War Department Circular 124 called for segregation of black soldiers below the battalion level. However, in recognition of the fact that the people of New Jersey had opted to legislate against this, the Army agreed to grant federal recognition to New Jersey National Guard units integrated at below the Battalion level.¹¹⁴

In February 1948, the Governor of Connecticut sent a telegram to Secretary Royall requesting authorization to integrate the Connecticut Army National Guard.¹¹⁵ On 6 March 1948, the Governor of Minnesota sent a request to the Secretary of Defense for permission to integrate the Minnesota Army National Guard and followed it up with a request for action to President Truman.¹¹⁶ Activists groups in New York, Ohio, and

California also pressured their state governors to integrate their respective National Guards.¹¹⁷ The White House Counsel, Clark Clifford, told Royall that the administration's preference was to allow the states to decide how to proceed in integration of the National Guard.¹¹⁸ Royall held to his position that the Army policy was that no unit below battalion level would integrate and all Army units needed to adhere to that standard.¹¹⁹

Democratic National Convention of 1948

In mid-July 1948, the Democratic National Convention convened in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to nominate its candidates for the 1948 Presidential election. This convention fractured the Democratic Party over the issue of civil rights, including ending segregation in the Armed Forces. The result was four candidates running for President, three of whom incorporated the ending of segregation in the military as part of their campaigns. This was another sign that the Army's desire to gradually change its race policy as conditions across the nation changed faced a challenge no matter who won the election. An issue so fractious and receiving so much attention would most likely see action by the elected administration.

The Democratic National Convention began on 12 July 1948. Civil rights was a simmering issue that boiled over during the second day of the convention. President Truman was content to utilize a moderate civil rights platform developed under Franklin D. Roosevelt's first run for the Presidency.¹²⁰ Liberal Democrats, led by Minnesota Senator Herbert Humphrey, succeeded in adding language to the Democratic platform calling on Congress to act on Truman's civil rights proposals, including establishing equal treatment in the military. This change caused thirty six delegates from Alabama and

Mississippi to walk out of the convention. Southern states formed the States' Rights Democratic Party and nominated Governor Strom Thurmond of South Carolina for the Presidency. Thurmond joined Truman, nominated by the Democrats to run for a second term, and former Vice President of the US, George Wallace, nominee from the Progressive Party, which had also split from the Democrats. Thomas Dewey, governor of New York, was the Republican nominee for President. Truman, Wallace and Dewey all had committed to ending discrimination in the military.¹²¹ In Truman's assessment, the southern Democrats broke with the Democratic Party in 1948 despite the fact that civil rights reform had been part of all four of Roosevelt's campaigns because they realized that Truman actually intended to carry through with civil rights reform.¹²²

Executive Order 9981

Following the Democratic National Convention, President Truman moved to solidify the black vote and demonstrate his intentions for civil rights reform if elected as President. On 26 July 1948, President Truman issued Executive Order 9981, establishing the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, commonly referred to as the Fahy Committee. Executive Order 9981 "declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin."¹²³ Truman stated in his memoirs that he felt integration was the best way to create an effective organization in which men would stand together and fight.¹²⁴ On 29 July 1948, during a press conference, President Truman made it clear that the objective of Executive Order 9981 was to end segregation in the Armed Forces. He charged the Fahy Committee with developing the methods for achieving this.¹²⁵

Defending Segregation: The Army and the
Fahy Committee 1949-1950

In January 1949, the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, commonly referred to as the Fahy Committee after its chairman Charles Fahy, began the process of conducting the assessment with which they were charged by Executive Order 9981. During the next seventeen months, the Committee consulted with the leaders of all three services as well as the Secretary of Defense in trying to establish policies and practices that would ensure equality without hampering military readiness.¹²⁶ Secretary of the Army Kenneth Royall and Chief of Staff of the Army General Omar Bradley launched a vigorous defense of the Army's use of partial segregation. Their defense contained so many different arguments that it smacked of desperation. Surveys released by the Army staff during this time also showed the wide disparity between the opinions and assessments of senior Army leadership and the indications from soldiers in the force. In the end, the Fahy Committee convinced the Army to grant a key concession--suspension of the use of its ten--quota on black participation in the Army.

On March 28, 1949, Royall and Bradley testified before the Fahy Committee and presented their defense of the practice of segregation. Both expressed similar themes stating that segregation was a necessary practice to ensure the readiness of the Army, Army practices already ensured equal opportunity for black soldiers and blacks in the Army did not feel that segregation was a problem. Ultimately the Army's position reflected its long-standing arguments that the Army needed to gradually change, matching the pace of the civilian community as a whole.

Bradley offered three main points to support his defense of partial segregation. First, he considered segregation as the only viable personnel policy to support the force in the event of another war. The Army must institute personnel policies that it could use in peace and war throughout the force. Integration before the social customs of all of the states progressed would hamper the Army's ability to do this.¹²⁷

Bradley's second point in defense of segregation was the potential effect on the efficiency of the Army. He pointed out that while volunteers choose whether to enter an integrated force, any use of Selective Service to conscript citizens in the future would bring soldiers into the Army who would not get to make that choice. To force draftees into an integrated force before they accepted integration in the civilian communities would only have a negative impact on morale and the Army's combat effectiveness.¹²⁸

His final defense of segregation centered around the positive impact that segregation held for black soldiers. Bradley argued that maintaining segregated units allowed black soldiers to compete with other black soldiers for promotions. In an integrated force, black soldiers would have to compete with white soldiers for these promotions and would operate at a distinct disadvantage.¹²⁹ He also used high reenlistment rates of black soldiers as evidence that blacks understood this and were not negatively affected by segregation.¹³⁰

In his autobiography, Bradley described desegregation as a "difficult and painful issue during his tenure as Chief of Staff of the Army."¹³¹ Despite having seen black soldiers fight as well as white soldiers during World War II, Bradley felt that any attempt to quickly integrate the Army would destroy the Army, cause turmoil in the Southern communities in which many Army posts were located and cost the Army support from

Southern Democrats who held key positions on the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees in both houses of Congress.¹³²

Secretary of the Army Kenneth Royall's statement to the Fahy Committee was an amalgam of warnings on the dire effects of trying to integrate and evidence that Royall claimed showed the success of the Army's current policies. Royall argued that the heavy population of soldiers from the South would result in low morale if the Army integrated. This would also decrease the number of people willing to enlist, forcing a return to the draft to meet manpower needs in the Army.¹³³ He used the New Jersey National Guard as an example, stating that it had been one year since the Governor of New Jersey had fully integrated the state National Guard. Only nine white soldiers had joined black units and thirty nine black soldiers joined white units. Enlistment in the New Jersey National Guard had suffered a 6 percent decrease in that year, the only state to have a decrease in enlistment rate.¹³⁴

Royall, like Bradley, described the Army's separate but equal policy as successful, as evidenced by the high reenlistment rate among black soldiers.¹³⁵ He pointed to establishment of composite regiments in the four of the Army's divisions and three composite service battalions as signs of progress towards integration.¹³⁶ Royall also defended the necessity of the use of the 10 percent racial quota due to the higher enlistment standards of the Air Force and Navy. Royall's rationale was that if the Army did not use a quota to maintain desired manning levels of black soldiers, the lower enlistment standard in the Army would result in larger numbers of minimally qualified soldiers entering the Army as the more qualified applicants would go the Air Force and Navy.¹³⁷

Over the next twelve months, the Fahy Committee essentially entered into a series of negotiations with the Army and the Secretary of Defense about the Army's policy for utilization of black soldiers. The Committee's review of the Army's current policies left them convinced that the Gillem Board recommendations implemented in Circular 124 had resulted in black soldiers not receiving equal opportunity for enlistment, career fields and schooling. As long as the Army restricted black soldiers to assignments in segregated units or overhead units this inequality would not change.¹³⁸ The Army signaled its intent to wage a protracted fight. In April 1949, Kenneth Royall sent a memo to the new Secretary of Defense, Louis A. Johnson, stating that the Army was in compliance with National Military Establishment policies requiring that all personnel are considered on the basis of individual merit and ability.¹³⁹ He added that the Army was in compliance with Executive Order 9981 and that Army policy "affords adequate flexibility in the utilization of Negro manpower without supplement at this time."¹⁴⁰ Lieutenant General Edward Brooks, the Army's Director of Personnel and Administration sent a letter to Lieutenant General Clarence Huebner, Deputy Commanding General of European Command, on 26 April 1949 reiterating that Circular 124 was still Army policy and met all National Military Establishment requirements. Brooks' letter also stated that he did not anticipate a departure from current Army policy unless a higher authority specified changes.¹⁴¹

During 1949, key leadership changes in the defense establishment undoubtedly changed the tenor of the Army's dealing with the Fahy Committee. In early 1949, President Truman appointed Louis Johnson as Secretary of Defense. Johnson served as Truman's primary fund-raiser during the 1948 Presidential campaign. He took office

firmly committed to the President's agenda on defense, particularly controlling costs and unifying the Armed Forces in practice. Johnson made it clear that he would not tolerate autonomous action on the part of any one service.¹⁴² Kenneth Royall resigned as Secretary of the Army in April 1949, his strong resistance to integration cited as the cause.¹⁴³ In August 1949, General Bradley was selected to serve as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and General J. Lawton Collins succeeded him as the Chief of Staff of the Army. Collins served as the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army for the past two years and was intimately familiar with the issue of integration.¹⁴⁴ Collins felt that the Army should provide equal opportunity to all soldiers in training and promotion while allowing politicians to work out the social aspects of integration.¹⁴⁵

Even with new leadership, the Army did not immediately surrender its position and capitulate to the arguments of the Fahy Committee. On 26 May 1949, the new Secretary of the Army, Gordon Gray, submitted a progress report to the Secretary of Defense. Gray's report offered the Army's oft-repeated litany of justifications for its partial segregation policy.¹⁴⁶ He also stated that many of the Army's senior leaders warned him that the Army readiness would be dangerously degraded if the population of blacks in the Army reached 15 percent. He used this to justify use the racial quota of 10 percent, estimating that elimination of the quota would result in an increase in the population of blacks in the Army to thirty to 40 percent very quickly.¹⁴⁷

However, the Fahy Committee's investigation soon revealed the lack of real progress in the Army. The Committee discovered that 198 out of 490 Army career fields had no authorizations for black soldiers, despite several of those career fields suffering from shortages. Only twenty-one out of 106 Army schools had authorizations for black

soldiers. Due to black soldiers exceeding 10 percent of the force, the Army had suspended enlistments of blacks, no matter how qualified. However, the Army did nothing to prevent minimally qualified soldiers from re-enlisting. Of all the black soldiers that were assigned to overhead units, the majority were employed as drivers, cooks, manual laborers and clerks.¹⁴⁸

On 25 July 1949, Charles Fahy informed Louis Johnson that the Army's latest proposal failed to establish equal opportunity because it retained the quota system and limited use of school-trained blacks. The Fahy Committee offered an alternative to the race quota by suggesting using a quota limiting the number of personnel entering the Army who scored in class IV or V on the General Classification Test.¹⁴⁹ On 30 September 1949, Gray finally showed a willingness to compromise on the part of the Army when he submitted another proposal to Secretary Johnson. This proposal would open all career fields to qualified personnel without regard to race or color, end the use of quotas for Army schools based on race or color, establish Army-wide competition for promotions against a single standard and send ROTC students to integrated summer training camps. However, Gray's proposal proposed retention of segregated black units as necessary tool for regulating black enlistments.¹⁵⁰ Johnson accepted Gray's proposal and informed the press, surprising the Fahy Committee and activists who felt that it still fell short of the mark. Fahy's refusal to accept the Army's new policy as sufficient forced President Truman to characterize Johnson's earlier announcement of a new policy in the Army as just a progress report in order to avoid having this political infighting spill out into the open.¹⁵¹

The end of this struggle between the Fahy Committee and the Army came in the 1950. On 16 January 1950, the Army announced that it would utilize blacks possessing appropriate skills and qualifications in any unit requiring a soldier with those skills and qualifications, regardless of race. Commanders were authorized to fill any other vacancies in white units with black soldiers possessing the appropriate skills.¹⁵² In February 1950, Fahy sent Gray a letter outlining analysis that the Committee had conducted on General Classification Test levels for black soldiers. This analysis demonstrated that with the Army's current enlistment requirement of a ninety on the GCT, only 16 to 19 percent of blacks would even be eligible.¹⁵³ On 1 March 1950, Gordon Gray sent a letter to President Truman stating his desire to suspend use of a racial quota for enlisting personnel. He requested the President's authorization if he felt that he needed to reinstitute the quota.¹⁵⁴ Truman approved the suspension of the racial quota at the end of March.¹⁵⁵ April 1950 was the first month that the Army did not issue a specific recruiting mission for black soldiers.¹⁵⁶

The Fahy Committee set four personnel practices for the Army that it felt would guarantee equal opportunity for black soldiers. These practices were: (1) Make all career fields available to qualified personnel; (2) eliminate race-based quotas for training at Army schools; (3) Assign all Army personnel according to ability; and (4) end use of racial quota to manage the population of black soldiers in the Army.¹⁵⁷ Ultimately, the Fahy Committee managed to get the Army to amend its policy.

Other Viewpoints

In 1949, the Army released two reports reflecting additional surveys conducted to determine attitudes of soldiers towards integration. In early 1950, a board of senior

officers appointed by the Secretary of the Army to review the Army's progress in the utilization of black soldiers, released its report. These would show evidence of changing attitudes among soldiers and a continued retrenchment on the part of senior Army leaders towards ending the practice of segregation in the Army.

In May 1949, the Army released additional findings from a survey conducted three years earlier. This survey was conducted in 1946 and gathered the opinions from 2,376 soldiers about their attitudes towards integration.¹⁵⁸ The survey results showed that only 4 to 14 percent of soldiers thought that the white and blacks should be totally integrated. Sixty-nine to eighty-eight percent did not want to work in a completely integrated unit. However, when integration was placed in context of a personal decision, many more of the soldiers were open to the idea of working and training together, as long as they maintained separate living quarters. Twenty-eight to forty-eight percent did not oppose segregation under these conditions.¹⁵⁹

In September 1949, the Army released the results of a survey taken earlier that year. This survey of 1,151 soldiers showed that education and origin were closely related to attitudes on integration. The survey found that while 61 percent of the soldiers opposed total integration (which included shared living and mess facilities), only 32 percent of soldiers opposed partial integration.¹⁶⁰ Seventy-six percent of soldiers who worked with blacks previously were in favor of some level of integration as compared to only 61 percent of those that had never worked with blacks before who favored integration.¹⁶¹ This represented a significant change in attitudes from the 1946 survey.

On 30 November 1949, the Secretary of the Army appointed Lieutenant General Stephen Chamberlin, Major General Withers Burgess, and Major General John Devine to

conduct the first periodic “review [of] the current progress under existing policies and procedures and the fundamental Army policies for utilization of Negro manpower.”¹⁶²

The Chamberlin Board released its report eight weeks later. The results of the Chamberlin Board report demonstrated the intractability of senior Army leaders on the issue of segregation and the role of black soldiers in the Army. The Chamberlin Board repeated the same arguments already refuted by the Fahy Committee. The Chamberlin Board concluded that the Army had shown significant progress in implementing its policy of partial segregation. Five of the Army’s ten divisions had organic black units assigned and assignment of black specialists to overhead units was progressing. The Chamberlin Board defended the Army’s use of the 10 percent quota. The report also criticized the Army’s use of composite battalions, stating the belief that composite battalions placed blacks in direct competition with white soldiers, and would lead to widespread resentment among white soldiers. Composite battalions also ran the risk of placing black officers and noncommissioned officers in positions of authority over white soldiers.¹⁶³

By April 1950, the Army had ostensibly agreed to eliminate most of the tools of discrimination with the exception of standing segregated units. The Army very grudgingly agreed to cease practices such as its 10 percent quota and authorizations for career fields and schools. While the Army remained committed at this time to a gradual process of integration, events in the next year forced a rapid acceleration of this process.

The Beginning of the End of Segregation

The outbreak of the Korean War served as a catalyst that spelled the end of segregation in the Army. During the first six months of the war, the Army doubled in

size. Many of the draftees and enlistees feeding this growth were black, no longer constrained by a quota.¹⁶⁴ The strength of black soldiers rose from 10 percent of the Army in April 1950, 11 percent by August 1950, almost 12 percent by January 1951, and more than 13 percent by December 1952.¹⁶⁵ This caused black units to quickly exceed authorized manning levels while operations in Korea required an increasing stream of replacement soldiers. Black soldiers composed 20 percent of the replacements sent to Korea.¹⁶⁶

Commanders in Korea took advantage of the new Army policy that allowed commanders to assign qualified blacks to fill vacant positions. These commanders sent black replacements to white units and cross-leveled black soldiers from over strength black units to undermanned white units. At the same time, commanders of training centers in the United States also moved away from segregation. Attempts to maintain segregated companies in the training base met with failure due to an inability to predict how many white and black trainees would arrive at training stations for each training cycle.¹⁶⁷

Integration gained key support during this time frame. Chief of Staff of the Army General J. Lawton Collins decided in August of 1950 that the outlook of young Americans favored integration and the Army needed to change its policies.¹⁶⁸ Colonel S. L. A. Marshall, termed by some as the Army's expert on the efficient conduct of infantry operations, went to Korea in November 1950 and observed integrated units in combat. Marshall's assessment of the performance of integrated units was positive and the 8th Army commanding general, Lieutenant General Walton Walker, asked Marshall to discuss his assessment with the media.¹⁶⁹ Despite Marshall's now dubious academic

record, the publicity he generated at the time with his findings was undoubtedly part of the swell of support generated for integration.¹⁷⁰

The largest segregated unit in the 8th Army was the 24th Infantry Regiment of the 25th Infantry Division. In late September 1950, the commanding general of the 25th Infantry Division, Major General William B. Kean, requested permission to disband the 24th Infantry Regiment due to poor performance. Historical examination has shown that not only was the 24th Infantry Regiment afflicted by the lack of resources and training that the rest of the 8th Army in Japan faced, but racism from its commanding officer had contributed to a breakdown in morale. Just as in World War II, this demonstrated the corrosive effects of discrimination and segregation on soldier morale. The 24th Infantry Regiment's performance was not as poor as stated by Kean or demonstrably worse than other regiments in 8th Army.¹⁷¹ The 8th Army had been thrown into battle before it was prepared to fight. Performance across the force was poor. Many units displayed a tendency to withdraw quickly on the battlefield.¹⁷²

General Matthew Ridgway, who assumed command of 8th Army in December 1950, believed that segregation was un-American and un-Christian. He consulted with Kean and decided to request permission from the commander of US forces in the Far East, General Douglas MacArthur to integrate in 8th Army. Due to ongoing combat operations, Ridgway postponed pursuing this issue with MacArthur due to ongoing combat operations.

In March 1951, the Army directed the Operations Research Office at John Hopkins University to conduct a study to discuss how best to utilize black soldiers in the Army. The Operations Research Office (ORO) served as a contracted research agency for

the Department of Defense, staffed with social scientists and a sub-contracted public opinion research firm. This study, named Project Clear, was not specifically designed to determine the value of segregation versus integration. Project Clear consisted of extensive surveys of military personnel and analysis of past and present Army policy by the social scientists. ORO conducted the study in two parts, focusing first on the combat theater in Korea and then Army forces in the United States. In July 1951, ORO presented its initial findings on utilization of black soldiers in the Far East Command to the Army leadership.¹⁷³ ORO's key findings and recommendations in July 1951 were:

(1) integration in the Far East Command was successful; (2) conduct integration throughout the Army; (3) engage civil rights leaders and black press to create understanding and support in the civilian population for the Army's policy on integration; and (4) clearly state the Army policy without ambiguity so that the entire force understood it.¹⁷⁴ In November 1951, ORO concluded its analysis of Army forces in the United States and made similar recommendations based upon the following findings: (1) black soldiers and white officers overwhelmingly favored integration; a minority of white enlisted personnel were strongly opposed to serving alongside of black soldiers; (2) white enlisted soldiers in integrated units followed the orders of black non-commissioned officers; (3) there was no evidence of racial conflict on posts with recreational facilities were integrated; and (4) education was required throughout the Army as many soldiers did not understand the Army's race policy.¹⁷⁵

In April 1951, Ridgway replaced MacArthur as the commanding general of Far East Command.¹⁷⁶ In May 1951, Ridgway asked for and received authorization from the Department of the Army to integrate Far East Command.¹⁷⁷ In December 1951, Collins

ordered the Army's other commands to prepare plans to integrate.¹⁷⁸ The Army completed the process of integrating in 1954.¹⁷⁹

Conclusion

The post-war period represented a time of great change for the Army. One area that the Army realized that it had to examine closely was the utilization of black soldiers. Despite ample evidence to the contrary, Army leadership entered the post-war era with an almost identical assessment of the performance and capabilities of black soldiers as the Army leadership following World War I. While some elements in the Army succeeded in introducing new sociological theories that contributed to the development of post-World War II policy on black soldiers, much of the Army leadership continued to revert back to dated concepts. Despite great pressure, the Army resisted taking significant steps towards integration out of fear. The Army feared that fundamental changes in the roles and relationships of black soldiers with the rest of the force would result in a backlash from white soldiers. Ultimately, new leadership at the head of the Army played a significant role in advancing towards integration. The decision to stop using a quota to control the entry of blacks into the service and the flexibility given to commanders to use blacks to fulfill vacancies combined with the rapid expansion of the Army due to the Korean War served as a perfect storm for integration. A rapid rise in the black population of the Army caused local commanders in the United States to initiate integration on their own. Once the genie was out of the bottle, the Army had no choice but to follow suit across the force.

¹Stewart, 211.

²Ibid., 204.

³Martin Walker, *The Cold War: A History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 28.

⁴*Ibid.*, 11.

⁵Stewart, 201.

⁶*Ibid.*, 213.

⁷Truman K. Gibson to John J. McCloy, Washington, DC, 8 August 1945, in *Planning for the Postwar Employment of Black Personnel*, vol. 7 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, ed. Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard Nalty (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1977), 16; 18.

⁸Lee, 416.

⁹Gibson to McCloy, 20.

¹⁰Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, "Opinions about Negro Infantry Platoons in White Companies of 7 Divisions," 3 July 1945, Desegregation of the Armed Forces collection, Harry S. Truman Library, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/documents/pdf/10-11.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed 14 November 2010), 1.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 2.

¹²*Ibid.*, 3.

¹³*Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁵Albert E. Williams, *Black Warriors—The Legacy* (Haverford, PA: Infinity Publishing, 2002), 183.

¹⁶J. Lawton Collins, *Lightning Joe: An Autobiography* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 355.

¹⁷"Opinions about Negro Infantry Platoons in White Companies of 7 Divisions," 8.

¹⁸C. C. Elebash, "Was It the Air Corps or Army Air Forces in WW II?," Army Air Forces Historical Association, http://www.aafha.org/aaf_or_aircorps.html (accessed 30 October 2010).

¹⁹Walter J. Boyne, *Beyond the Wild Blue: A History of the United States Air Force from 1947-1997* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), 22-24.

²⁰Army Service Forces, "Participation of Negro Troops in the Postwar Military Establishment," Washington, DC, 27 September 1945, in *Planning for the Postwar*

Employment of Black Personnel, vol. 7 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 32.

²¹Army Ground Forces, "Participation of Negro Troops in the Postwar Military Establishment," Washington, DC, 28 November 1945, in *Planning for the Postwar Employment of Black Personnel*, vol. 7 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 102-103.

²²*Ibid.*, 101, 108-111.

²³Army Service Forces, "Participation of Negro Troops in the Postwar Military Establishment," 33.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 118.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 95.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 113-116.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 57.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 95.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 100.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 119.

³¹*Ibid.*, 59.

³²Truman Gibson to John J. McCloy, 18.

³³War Department, "Circular No. 124 Utilization of Negro Manpower in the Postwar Army Policy," 27 April 1946, Desegregation of the Armed Forces collection, Harry S. Truman Library, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/documents/pdf/10-4.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed 14 November 2010), 2.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵*Ibid.*, 3.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 4.

³⁷Steven Pressman, "An American Dilemma: Fifty Years Later," *Journal of Economic Issues* 28, no. 2 (June 1994): 577-579.

³⁸Mershon and Schlossman, 112-113.

³⁹War Department, "Circular No. 124 Utilization of Negro Manpower in the Postwar Army Policy," 4.

⁴⁰Ibid., 4-5.

⁴¹Ibid., 5.

⁴²Ibid., 6-7.

⁴³Ibid., 12.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., 9-11. Overhead and installation units referred to organization designed specifically to manage the running of a post, installation or institution such as a training center or school.

⁴⁶War Department, "Tabs A-L to Supplemental Report of War Department Special Board on Negro Manpower," January 1946, Combined Armed Research Library Digital Library, http://cgsc.cdmhost/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/p4013coll11&CISOPTR=1257&CISOBOX=1&REC=14 (accessed 14 November 2010), 12.

⁴⁷Lee, 204.

⁴⁸"Tabs A-L to Supplemental Report of War Department Special Board on Negro Manpower," 27.

⁴⁹Ibid., 16.

⁵⁰Ibid., 21-22.

⁵¹John J. McCloy to Judge Patterson, Washington, DC, 24 November 1945, in *Planning for the Postwar Employment of Black Personnel*, vol. 7 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 342.

⁵²Ibid., 343.

⁵³Truman K. Gibson and Steve Huntley, *Knocking Down Barriers: My Fight for Black America* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 211.

⁵⁴Ibid., 219.

⁵⁵Truman K. Gibson to Robert P. Patterson, Washington, DC, 28 November 1945, in *Planning for the Postwar Employment of Black Personnel*, vol. 7 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 344.

⁵⁶Ibid., 345.

⁵⁷Ibid., 346.

⁵⁸Michael Stewart, “Raising a Pragmatic Army: Officer Education at the US Army Command and General Staff College, 1946-1986” (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2010), 15.

⁵⁹Stephen B. Mack, “Policy for Utilization of Negro Troops in the Armed Forces” (Study, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1946), http://cgsc.cdmhost/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/p124201coll2&CISOPTR=433&CISOBX=1&REC=7 (accessed 14 November 2010), Tab A-1.

⁶⁰Mack, 2.

⁶¹Mack, Tab A-1.

⁶²Mack, 2.

⁶³Mack, Tab A-2.

⁶⁴F. C. Cook et al., “Utilization of Negro Troops in a National Emergency” (Study, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1946), http://cgsc.cdmhost/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/p4013coll11&CISOPTR=1657&CISOBX=1&REC=8 (accessed 14 November 2010), 2.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁶War Department, “Circular 124: Utilization of Negro Manpower in the Postwar Army Policy,” 1.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 1-2.

⁶⁸Robert Patterson to President’s Committee on Civil Rights, “War Department Policies and Practices Related to Civil Rights,” 15 May 1947, Desegregation of the Armed Forces collection, Harry S. Truman Library, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/documents/pdf/15-2.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed 14 November 2010), 6.

⁶⁹War Department, “Army Talk 170,” in *Segregation Under Siege*, vol. 8 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, ed. Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard Nalty (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1977), 81.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 83-87.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 88.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 91.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 93.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 105.

- ⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 106.
- ⁷⁶European Command, “Negro Personnel in the European Command,” in *Segregation Under Siege*, vol. 8 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 136.
- ⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 123.
- ⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 124.
- ⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 126.
- ⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 126-127.
- ⁸¹*Ibid.*, 133.
- ⁸²*Ibid.*, 132.
- ⁸³*Ibid.*, 135.
- ⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 141-142.
- ⁸⁵James C. Evans, “The Negro in the Army: Policy and Practice,” in *Segregation Under Siege*, vol. 8 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 727.
- ⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 713.
- ⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 728.
- ⁸⁸Patterson to President’s Committee on Civil Rights, 4.
- ⁸⁹Evans, 715-716.
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- ⁹¹Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, vol. 2 of *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1956), 181.
- ⁹²Wilson et al., 41, 46.
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⁹⁷Ibid., 100-102.

⁹⁸Ibid., 162.

⁹⁹Ibid., 83.

¹⁰⁰Robert J. Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1977), 136-137.

¹⁰¹Jervis Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972), 274.

¹⁰²Gibson, *Knocking Down Barriers*, 226.

¹⁰³Ibid., 227.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 274.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 276.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 276-277.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 278-279.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 279.

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¹¹⁴Department of the Army Public Information Division Memorandum to the Press, 8 February 1948, Desegregation of the Armed Forces collection, Harry S. Truman Library, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/documents/pdf/4-8.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed 14 November 2010).

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¹¹⁸Clark Clifford to Kenneth Royall, 10 August 1948, Desegregation of the Armed Forces collection, Harry S. Truman Library, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/documents/pdf/4-12.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed 14 November 2010).

¹¹⁹MacGregor, 320-321.

¹²⁰Truman, 183.

¹²¹Donovan, 406.

¹²²Truman, 183.

¹²³Harry S. Truman, "Executive Order 9981," 26 July 1948, Desegregation of the Armed Forces collection, Harry S. Truman Library, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=84&sortorder=> (accessed 14 November 2010), 1.

¹²⁴Truman, 183.

¹²⁵Donald R. McCoy and Richard T. Ruetten, *Quest and Response: Minority Rights and the Truman Administration* (Lawrence, KS: The University Press of Kansas, 1973), 222.

¹²⁶Charles Fahy et al., *Freedom To Serve* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1950), 2-3.

¹²⁷Omar Bradley to President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces, 28 March 1949, Desegregation of the Armed Forces collection, Harry S. Truman Library, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/documents/pdf/10-1.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed 14 November 2010), 2-3.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, 6.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, 4.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, 3.

¹³¹Omar Bradley and Clay Bair, *A General's Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 484.

¹³²*Ibid.*, 485.

¹³³Kenneth Royall to President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces, 28 March 1949, Desegregation of the Armed Forces collection, Harry S. Truman Library, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/documents/pdf/4-17.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed 14 November 2010), 2.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, 5.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 3-4.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, 7.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 4.

¹³⁸Fahy et al., 62.

¹³⁹Memorandum from Kenneth Royall to Secretary of Defense, Washington, DC, 21 April 1949, in *The Fahy Committee*, vol. 11 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, ed. Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard Nalty (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1977), 1228.

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¹⁴¹Letter from LTG Edward Brooks to LTG Clarence Huebner, Washington, DC, 26 April 1949, in *Integration*, vol. 12 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, ed. Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard Nalty (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1977), 144.

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¹⁵⁰Memorandum from Gordon Gray to Louis Johnson, Washington, DC, 30 September 1949, in *The Fahy Committee*, vol. 11 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 1296.

¹⁵¹MacGregor, 363-366.

¹⁵²Fahy et al., 63.

¹⁵³Memorandum from Charles Fahy to Gordon Gray, Washington, DC, 9 February 1950, in *The Fahy Committee*, vol. 11 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 1346.

¹⁵⁴Letter from Charles Fahy to Louis Johnson, Washington, DC, 1 March 1950, in *Integration*, vol. 12 of *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, 1296-1297.

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¹⁶⁵MacGregor, 430.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The Army as Social Reformer

In 2003, Charles Moskos, a sociologist and former soldier, described the Army as “an institution unmatched in its level of racial integration and its broad record of black achievement.”¹ The fact that the Army has achieved this status in American society is a remarkable achievement given how far it had to come. Without a doubt the fifteen years from 1939 to 1954 represent a seminal time period in the evolution of the Army as an institution that serves as a modern-day example of positive race relations and equal opportunity. During this time period, the Army transformed from a force that utilized policies and practices for the treatment and utilization of black soldiers rooted in the post-Civil War era to becoming a leading agency of social change.

Perhaps the most important consideration is the contentiousness and murkiness of the question facing the Army during this time period. While from a modern point of view, the question of racial equality and equal opportunity seems clear cut, the Army found itself caught in a maelstrom of social upheaval that it was not prepared for and unwilling to face. It is ironic that the Army transitioned from an institution fighting fiercely to maintain the status quo as late as 1950 to an institution that would help advance the cause of civil rights tremendously during the 1960s. In 1963, the Army, under the direction of the Department of Defense, began to work with local communities to decrease discrimination in areas such as recreation, restaurants and housing.²

The Army’s transition to a racially integrated force is marked by two remarkable trends. Leadership is the first trend, both positive and negative. Many Army leaders, both

uniformed and civilian, stand out undeniably as men of vision who foresaw the need for the Army to change. Some arrived at this conclusion due to morality, others due to more pragmatic motivations but they all saw what others could or would not. These leaders include Gordon Gray, Truman K. Gibson, John J. McCloy, Generals Matthew Ridgway and J. Lawton Collins, and Lieutenant General Clarence Huebner to name a few. Other leaders, for various reasons, were unable or unwilling to leave the comfort of the status quo, advocating policies regarding black soldiers that added to the difficulties of fighting both World War II and the Korean War. Some of these leaders, such as Generals George C. Marshall and Omar Bradley, were remarkable men in every sense of the word and among the most accomplished Americans in history. This demonstrates the complex nature of the issue of racial attitudes. Other leaders acted out of what can only be termed malice caused by racism at its ugliest form. Chief among these is Lieutenant General Edward Almond. Almond proved himself lacking as a senior commander, often choosing to blame subordinates for failure rather than accepting responsibility. Unfortunately, his performance as a staff officer in the inter-war period gained him a great deal of credibility. His opinions influenced many Army leaders' perceptions of black soldiers, especially those leaders who continued to harbor the idea that blacks were racially inferior and incapable of serving as combat troops.

The second remarkable trend that runs throughout this period of transition is courage. Mid-level Army leaders (regimental, group and division commanders), who often gave black units an opportunity to perform on the battlefield and did not hesitate to sing their praises when they did perform well, displayed moral courage. Civil rights activists, who often risked imprisonment and threats of being branded traitors to either

the nation or their race, yet continued to fight for equality in the military displayed great courage. Above all, those black and white citizens who fought in black units under great scrutiny and in harrowing conditions displayed remarkable physical and moral courage.

What Does It All Mean

What was the impact of manning, training and utilization of black combat units during World War II on the Army's decision-making on racial integration? The Army's decision-making on racial integration during the post-war period suffered due to the Army leadership's failure to recognize that World War II had disproven its justification for maintaining a segregated force. The Army believed that segregation provided the most efficient military force despite proven inefficiencies caused by manning, training, stationing and employing a segregated force. Army leaders felt that the Army was not a tool for social reform and ignored the increasing political pressure that indicated that no one else felt the same way. The Army's most important argument against integration was the fear that integrating its force would cause a breakdown in discipline and good order among white soldiers. These factors led the Army to resist taking any substantial measures towards integration during the post-war years.

The Army believed that segregation provided the most efficient military forces because it allowed the Army to concentrate black soldiers in those career fields for which they were best suited and prevented the dilution of white combat units with black soldiers that were not capable. This resulted from the belief held by senior Army leader that blacks were not suited of conducting ground combat in close proximity to the enemy and did not have the characteristics required to successfully lead soldiers on the battlefield. Following World War II, these beliefs about the capabilities of blacks caused the Army to

continue to restrict the career opportunities for black soldiers. Unfortunately, the Army's assessment of the performance of black combat units in World War II was heavily influenced by the performance and reports of the 92nd Infantry Division. This caused the Army to downplay the significance of the outstanding performances of the separate battalions and regiments outside of the two infantry divisions.

The Army consistently expressed its belief that it was not the right institution to lead social change and reform. While there was some validity to their argument, the reality was that political demand for the Army to assume such a role continually increased. It was clear from the time the United States entered World War II that civil rights activists had chosen the military, particularly the Army, as a battleground to fight segregation. These activists' ability to use the demographic changes of the Great Migration to gain political relevancy provided access to the Roosevelt and Truman administrations.³ Multiple federal agencies and legislators encouraged the use of the military as part of an overarching federal solution to address civil rights. With President Truman's issuance of Executive Order 9981, the Army along with the other services became an agent of social reform, whether they wanted to or not. The Air Force and Navy met the Executive Order aggressively and implemented it on their terms. The Army resisted and had decisions forced upon it.

Finally, Army leadership held the belief that segregation was necessary to maintain discipline as integrating black and white soldiers would cause racial conflict that would tear the Army apart. The Army held this belief despite the fact that feedback from World War II on several integrated activities demonstrated that close proximity and communication that came from integration would actually strengthen relationships

between races. The Army also ignored the evidence from World War II that the debilitating effects of segregation on black morale caused more racial conflict than any other factor. The Army chose to plan based upon the worst case scenario, rather than trusting soldiers and leaders, despite evidence that given the opportunity, black and white soldiers would learn to co-exist.

The end result of the Army's action was to delay implementation of integration during the post-war period. Since the Fahy Committee forced the Army to abandon its use of a racial quota for enlistment, the Army was not prepared for the rapid growth of blacks in the Army. As an Army in disrepair attempted to focus on fighting the North Koreans and then possibly the Chinese, it also had to deal with integrating on the fly.

Contemporary Value

Does the fight to integrate the Army over fifty years ago have any value today? Just as the fight for racial equality in the Army did not end in 1954 with the announcement that all the units in the Army had integrated, neither does the value and impact of that struggle. There are three contemporary questions to which this study may provide insight that deal with the legacy of those who fought to gain equal opportunity in the service, the right of every citizen to participate in the Armed Forces, and finally the role of Army leaders in balancing political directives against service interests.

The first question is whether blacks today have an obligation to uphold the legacy of those World War II soldiers and activists by continuing to participate in both the Army and the combat arms. There are some members of the Army who feel that the current generation of black America has turned its back on military service, particularly in combat branches. Any doubts of whether this is truly a relevant topic today should be

dispelled by the fact that there have been at least eleven studies since 1995 by Army officers examining this topic.⁴ Major James Smith espoused a theory in 2006 that the Global War on Terrorism has diminished the inclination of blacks to serve in the military.⁵ Two other Army officers, Majors Oscar Doward, Jr. and Emmett E. Burke have highlighted the relatively low number of black officers entering into the combat arms of the Army. In Burke's estimation, the number of black officers in non-combat arms has grown disproportionately, creating a lack of diversity in the officer corps that is an institutional Army concern.⁶ Doward also describes an officer corps in which the percentage of black officers in the supply and procurement field is three times higher than the percentage of black officers in combat arms. The impact of this is a severe underrepresentation of blacks among the senior leaders (general officers) of the Army, as these leaders are drawn overwhelmingly from the combat arms.⁷ This underrepresentation means there is no voice representing the perspectives of blacks amongst the decision-makers of the Army. This deficit even drew the attention of former Army Chief of Staff, General Eric Shinseki, who, during his tenure as Chief of Staff of the Army, directed a study of minority underrepresentation in the senior leadership of the Army.⁸ Colonel Randolph White, Jr., portrays the Army as unwilling to discuss this topic openly.⁹

The second question revolves around whether every citizen has the right to participate in the Armed Forces or can the nation exclude a group because it believes their participation will hamper the effectiveness of the military? The two groups that come readily to mind are women and homosexuals. The Rand Corporation's National Defense Research Institute published a study in 1993 that stated the process of integrating

the Armed Forces is more analogous to the debate on homosexuals in the military than the debate on whether women should fight in combat.¹⁰ While all three issues are unique, they all deal with a conflict between social mores and fears of impacts to military effectiveness. The current ban on homosexuals openly serving in the military was enacted by Congress in legislation passed in 1993.¹¹ The restrictions on assigning women to the combat arms branches of the Army were enacted in 1977 by a policy directive from the Secretary of the Army.¹² All three issues, to one extent or another, involve intolerance, fear, making generalizations about the capabilities of a group of people at the expense of losing the ability to evaluate individuals, and asking people to serve in military while subverting key elements of themselves. The Army, after succumbing to indecision on such issues during the post-World War II era, cannot afford to have decisions thrust upon it again.

The third contemporary topic in which this study offers value is that of the role of Army leaders in balancing political directives with service interests. The concept of civilian control over the military is a core value of our nation.¹³ While there are many members of the Army that undoubtedly believe that policy-makers should leave the running of the Army to its leadership, Army leaders have an obligation under the Constitution to adhere to the orders of government. There will come times when the priorities of the administration disadvantage the Army. The obligation of the Army is to engage in a dialogue that ensures the administration understands the impacts to the Army. When the dialogue is completed, the Army must execute vigorously. At times, the Army of post-World War II seemed much more focused on what it believed the right course of action was than what the administration directed it to do. The Army of a democratic

nation cannot afford even the perception of any ambiguity in its subordination to the government. The leaders of the Army that fought World War II and Korea faced a extremely difficult situation. An organization that earned a reputation for audacity during war, tread very cautiously due to fear of the worst case scenario in regards to enacting change in the area of race relations. Choosing not to act placed the Army in the position in which its policies and practices were essentially decided for it by politicians and subordinate-level commanders. Without a doubt, race relations, tolerance, and the civil-military relationship are topics that the Army will continue to deal with in the foreseeable future. The lessons of that now distant time still resonate today.

¹Charles Moskos, "Overcoming Race: Army Lessons for American Society," Military Officers Association of America website, http://www.moaa.org/Magazine.February2003/f_race/asp (accessed 6 November 2010).

²Morris J. MacGregor, "Armed Forces Integration–Forced or Free?" (paper presented at The Military and Society: 5th Military History Symposium, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 5-6 October 1972), in Air Force Historical Studies, www.airforcehistory.hq.af.mil/publications/.../the_military_and_society.pdf (accessed 14 November 2010), 131-132.

³The Great Migration describes the movement of blacks in the early 1900s from the rural South to the North and urban areas of the South, as described in Chapter 2.

⁴Randolph Clifford White, Jr., "Wasting Time: Black Participation in the Combat Arms Branches" (Strategy Research Project, US Army War College, 2009), <http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ada499283> (accessed 14 November 2010), 2-3

⁵James M. Smith, "Global War on Terrorism–The Propensity for Blacks to Serve in the US Army" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2006), http://cgsc.cdmhost/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/p4013coll3&CISOPTR=763&CISOBX=1&REC=4 (accessed 14 November 2010), 2.

⁶Emmett E. Burke, "Black Officer Under-representation in Combat Arms Branches" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2002), http://cgsc.cdmhost/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/p4013coll3&CISOPTR=216&CISOBX=1&REC=8 (accessed 14 November 2010), 2-3.

⁷Oscar W. Doward, Jr., “Missing in Action: African American Combat Arms Officers in the United States Army” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2008), http://cgsc.cdmhost/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/p4013coll3&CISOPTR=2293&CISOBOX=1&REC=1 (accessed 14 November 2010), 2-3.

⁸White, 8.

⁹Ibid., 13.

¹⁰National Defense Research Institute, “Sexual Orientation and US Military Personnel Policy: Options and Assessment,” RAND Corporation website, 158-159. http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/2009/MR323part1.pdf (accessed 14 November 2010).

¹¹Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, “About ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,’” <http://www.sldn.org/pages/about-dadt> (accessed 7 November 2010).

¹²Richard D. Hooker, Jr., “Affirmative Action and Combat Exclusion: Gender Roles in the US Army,” *Parameters* 14, no. 4 (1989): 36-37.

¹³Jim Garamone, “Why Civilian Control of the Military,” US Department of Defense, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=45870> (accessed 7 November 2010).

GLOSSARY

Black. Individuals of the racial and ethnic group comprised of Americans of African descent. Used synonymously with terms from earlier time periods, such as colored, Negro or African American.

Black America. Blacks as a collective segment of American society.

Civil rights activists. A number of personnel and groups who actively sought to improve the ability of minorities to exercise the rights provided to all citizens by the Constitution.

Desegregation: Ending of laws or practices that mandate the separation of blacks from whites in the United States (workplaces, public accommodations, etc).

Great Migration. The relocation of millions of blacks from the rural South to urban areas in both the North and South of the United States between 1900-1945.

Integration. Process of assimilating blacks by providing equal opportunity based on ability.

Jim Crow. Common term among blacks to describe state and local laws used from the 1890s to the 1960s in parts of the United States to enforce racial segregation and discrimination under the separate but equal doctrine.

Overhead and installation units. Army units designed specifically to manage and support an Army installation, post, training center, school or large headquarters.

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